The Department of Pharmacognosy is one of the basic departments at the Faculty of Pharmacy, which gained the status of an independent university faculty in 1957.

Ferencz József University of Kolozsvár, the direct predecessor of our university, which was founded in 1872, has two successor institutes concerning medical and pharmaceutical scientific relations: one is our university, which was established in Szeged in 1921, and the other is the Medical and Pharmaceutical University of Târgu Mureş, established in 1949.

At the University of Kolozsvár, the subject now called pharmacognosy was originally taught as ‘Cognition of Medicines’ by Professor József Lőte and later by Professor Zsigmond Jakabházy, as members of the Pharmaceutical Institute. In 1921, Ferencz József University of Kolozsvár was transferred to Szeged, where, between 1921 and 1935, ‘Cognition of Medicines’ for pharmacy students was taught by Professor Béla Issekutz. Between 1937 and 1945 the head of department, Professor Miklós Jancsó, entrusted Dr. Sándor Tukats, and later Dr. Zoltán Dirner with these educational tasks. From the academic year 1944/1945, this subject was delivered by Dr. István Novák, senior chemist of the university’s dispensary.

In 1941 the Institute of Pharmaceutics was fused with the Institute of Pharmacology, but in 1948 the two institutes again separated. In 1953 the Institute of Pharmaceutics was led by Professor István Novák, under modest financial circumstances on the 2nd floor of the building at 6 Eötvös Street.

The name and functions of the Department of Pharmaceutics were changed in 1954 due to the fact that this name, originating from the 19th century, no longer expressed the subject material taught by the Department, nor met the professional level required by of the era. The name Department of Pharmacognosy has been used since 1954.
History of the leadership of the Department

The first head of the Department from 1954 until his retirement in 1977, was Professor István Novák. Under his leadership, the subject of dynamic pharmacognosy was developed from the previous, static pharmacognosy following the principles of Alexander Tschirch, and the increasingly chemical content of this discipline emerged, on the basis of which the Department became internationally well-known.

From 1977, under the direction of Professor Kálmán Szendrei, the phytochemical research and the international and industrial connections of the Department were significantly extended. From 1977 to 1979, Dr. András Háznagy was the acting leader of the Department during Professor Szendrei's absence on foreign service in Geneva. In 1979, Professor Szendrei resumed his directorial duties, but he was again delegated for UN service in 1984, the acting chair from October 1984 to March 1993, being Dr. László Tóth.

In 1993, Professor Imre Máthé was appointed head of the Department. He developed the Department’s research profile with an analytical orientation and examinations of production biology in addition to the previous preparative phytochemical research programmes. Professor Máthé cultivated close relations with a number of national research institutes, primarily with the Research Institute of Ecology and Botany of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and also significantly broadened the Department’s international cooperation. The commencement of the Ph.D. programme of the Department is linked with his name. The doctoral programme in Pharmacognosy was accredited in 1998, and has which is continued within the frame of the Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences since 2000.

The current head of the Department is Professor Judit Hohmann, who became director of the Department on 15 June 2007.