1. PHARMD+

**OBJECTIVE:** The expansion of pharmacy schools across the country has resulted in a more competitive landscape, not only for attracting students, but also for our graduates gaining employment. We must explore curricular, pedagogical, and programmatic approaches to enhance the competitiveness of our students in the workplace and to make our program stand out from others. In short, we need to define the “+” in PharmD+.

**UPDATE:** A key point of emphasis in the PharmD+ initiative is to adjust the core pharmacy curriculum to provide students with greater flexibility to focus on specific career paths within pharmacy.

One of the areas being explored is the bundling of designated professional electives to create pathways leading to certificates. The coupling of a certificate and a Pharm.D. degree will provide students with a level of expertise beyond the “standard” Doctor of Pharmacy, thereby creating a point of differentiation for ACPHS students when competing with graduates from other schools.

The Vermont Campus will refine this approach further by developing new courses focusing on primary care and working with the medically underserved. This curricular focus will provide graduates who choose the primary care option with the ability to more quickly transition into settings such as physician offices and ambulatory care clinics while at the same time helping meet the expanding need for primary care services.

As part of this initiative, the College’s Vermont Campus is also piloting a longitudinal community pharmacy Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experience (IPPE) with a small cohort of students. Instead of the IPPE taking place in the summer as it does now, the College is considering offering the IPPE during the spring semester so that students can better connect their classroom work and their practice experiences. Based on the positive feedback from the first group of students to test this model, a decision has been made to expand the program for the 2016-17 academic year.

The College’s two student operated pharmacies (see page 7) will offer additional integrated learning opportunities – ranging from counseling patients to running a business. These experiences will not only enhance a student’s education, but it will provide them with benefits that will extend throughout their careers.

2. ENHANCING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, EXISTING AND NEW

We need to think strategically about which programs in addition to pharmacy we want to emphasize, i.e., which ones will attract students and provide the greatest opportunities for our graduates.

To be a sustainable, vibrant institution, we need at least two large undergraduate degree programs (with 100 students or more) and one large graduate program (50 students or more). These programs need to be aligned with our core strengths and the pharmacy program. Our conversation will define the best prospects for programmatic enhancement and growth.

**UPDATE:** In spring 2016, the College announced that it would be adding a B.S. program in Public Health, offering a strong complement to the current program mix focused on human health and health care. Students will be eligible to enroll in the Public Health program beginning in fall 2016.

In addition to these efforts, ACPHS is developing online certificate programs targeting emerging skill sets being sought by employers in the current healthcare and research environment. Proposed disciplines for graduate certificate programs include Nanomedicine, Pharmacovigilance (Drug Monitoring and Safety), Regulatory Science/Affairs, and Economics of Healthcare. The first certificate courses are expected to be offered beginning in the 2016-17 academic year.

Plans include the ability for individuals to pursue a single certificate program or combine multiple certificates to earn a master’s degree.

3. CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

Centers of Excellence provide a focus for faculty scholarship, research, and pedagogical innovation. They also provide a focus for fundraising opportunities. A Center of Excellence will consist of a cluster of faculty working on a common overarching problem. Centers can house endowed chairs, professorships, lecture series, core facilities, grant opportunities, and student research opportunities. Centers will foster interactions that allow faculty and students to work in interdisciplinary collaborative teams. Our strategic conversation has explored the themes and sustainable models for these Centers.

**UPDATE:** The most efficient and effective way to establish Centers of Excellence at a small college is to build out from existing areas of strength. In 2015, the College asked faculty and staff to submit ideas that had the potential to become Centers of Excellence.
Following review of the proposals, two Centers of Excellence concepts have been selected for development. One proposal is focused on Epigenetic Studies; the second proposal centers around Anti-Microbial Drug Resistance. Each of these disciplines includes an existing foundation of ACPHS faculty experts with demonstrated research achievements in the field.

The College next plans to bring in an external consultant to work with the groups to refine the mission and operation of each Center. The groups have also submitted a “fundraising” whitepaper that articulates to a non-scientific external audience the vision and need for their Center.

These activities are viewed as developmental steps that will eventually lead to the launch of two Centers of Excellence, and ultimately, a stronger research environment at ACPHS.

4. THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

We need to continue our work on developing a vibrant campus community. We need to build activities that create a strong interface between academic affairs and student affairs. Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities must link what happens in the classroom with what happens outside the classroom, providing a holistic student experience. Our conversation will explore how we can build this type of experience and how we can enhance our campus life. We will explore the human, physical, and technological infrastructure requirements to develop such a student experience.

UPDATE: To create the best possible experience for its students, a College must offer a complementary mix of academic and non-academic programming. Advising and mentoring play key roles in helping ensure the ideal balance is achieved for each student.

During the 2015-16 academic year, the College began offering new monthly training sessions for faculty advisors to help refine their counseling and advising skills. In parallel with this effort, a “Coffee Talk” series was launched for first year students. These informal discussions provide a relaxed setting for students to discuss anything on their mind with a member of the Student Affairs staff.

In the area of mentoring, one new program was kicked off and another one expanded. A new initiative launched in response to student feedback uses the LinkedIn platform to connect students with alumni. The initial feedback from both students and alumni on this effort has been very positive. Additionally, the College’s renewed effort to increase the number of peer mentors on campus resulted in 140 applications for 89 positions.

The response allowed every student seeking an upperclass student mentor to be matched with one, including all students on the Vermont Campus.

Looking ahead, the College will be pursuing a prestigious Community Engagement Classification from The Carnegie Foundation. To receive this designation, institutions must demonstrate, among other things, how they “prepare educated, engaged citizens; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.”

5. CORPORATE RELATIONS AND THE TEACHER-CONSULTANT MODEL

ACPHS has had strong historical ties to various sectors of pharmacy and the pharmaceutical industry. We need to institutionalize these ties in more formal ways and provide greater experiential learning access to industry for our students. Our practices involving rotations, internships, fellowships, and residencies need to be aligned. Strategic partnerships with specific organizations and corporations need to be developed in an intentional manner. As these partnerships grow, there will be opportunities for faculty and student consulting projects, and we need to build the business development infrastructure to support this activity. Our strategic conversation will center on how we build these corporate relations and the sectors on which we will focus.

UPDATE: Three key initiatives have been identified as vehicles for building and enhancing the College’s ties with businesses and corporations: (1) Fellowships/residencies that split between ACPHS and the corporate partner, (2) ACPHS educational programs or certificate offerings (in-person and online) for employees at these institutions and organizations, (3) Business consulting services that would be performed by students under the guidance of ACPHS faculty and staff.

Following the establishment of these three areas of focus, a follow-up survey was sent out to faculty and staff at the College. More than 50 individuals responded that they would be interested in participating in one or more of these initiatives, with each identifying specific areas of interest and strength.

We have decided to first target corporations that are local to our campuses and those which we have pre-existing relationships. Five companies have been identified as potential partners for one of the above mentioned initiatives.

Feedback from these initial outreach efforts will be used to further refine the College’s corporate relations strategy as we explore additional partners and opportunities.