

The ACT Pharmacy Collaborative Community Pharmacy Centers of Excellence Report: A Blueprint for Community Pharmacy Excellence in Academia

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Introduction

The ACT (Academia-Community Transformation) Pharmacy Collaborative

The [Academia-Community Transformation \(ACT\) Pharmacy Collaborative](#) is an operational learning and ACTing collaborative made up of colleges and schools of pharmacy committed to transformation of community pharmacy practice from a product-based model to a community-based pharmacy care delivery model. As of July 2025, 116 colleges/schools are committed to the following: 1) **Uniting** with each other and community practice leaders nationwide, 2) **Mobilizing** collaborators and resources to further implementation of practice transformation, and 3) **Amplifying** the development and implementation of sustainable patient care delivery in community pharmacy.¹

In response to a request from the Community Pharmacy Enhanced Services Network (CPESN) USA, a team at the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy was awarded a grant in 2019 from the Community Pharmacy Foundation (CPF) to create the ACT Pharmacy Collaborative (initially named the Academia-CPESN Transformation Pharmacy Collaborative). Founding partners included the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP), CPESN, CPF, and the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy. Additional collaborative partners have joined since then, including the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP), the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), and the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA). From 2019–2024, CPF provided a series of grants supporting the development of each aspect of the Collaborative based at the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy with the goal to create a permanent national home for the Collaborative. In 2024, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between AACCP and the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy to operationalize the work of the Collaborative through the AACCP Transformation Center (ATC) as the long-term home of the Collaborative.

Since its inception, the input and interests of pharmacy faculty, CPESN luminaries, and other practice leaders have steered the design and work of the ACT Pharmacy Collaborative as a part of the ACT Task Force. This leadership team drives the mission of the group while continually taking input of the Collaborative members translating ideas into action. Each of the ACT programs and initiatives, including the Casebook, 50 Stories from 50 States, National Day of Service, ACT Educators Badge, ACT Student Scholars Program and the ACT Community Pharmacy Centers of Excellence were developed with the input and leadership of the ACT Task Force.

Academia's Role in Advancing the Front Door of Pharmacy

Community pharmacy practice has long been the first place the public meets a pharmacist. For prospective students, it may be where they become inspired to become a pharmacist or encounter their first internship. Yet, community pharmacy is changing rapidly. The business model that has long supported community pharmacy practices is no longer viable resulting in closures and pharmacy deserts around the United States.

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Coupled with increasing primary care shortages, there is a demand for community pharmacies to evolve to better meet the patient care needs of communities nationwide.

The junction of the change of business model from a focus on medication procurement to a business model inclusive of patient care and medical billing contracts has resulted in an evolution of expectations within the pharmacy, new job opportunities, and at times, confusion of how all of this will be implemented. For students, including prospective students, this can be worrisome and create uncertainty of community pharmacy as a career path. The public and the profession need students and new graduates to be leaders of change and providers of patient care in communities nationwide. Every college and school of pharmacy has a responsibility to ensure students experience a breadth of practice environments and have exposure to leadership opportunities across the profession, including in the community pharmacy setting.

The ACT Pharmacy Collaborative designed a recognition program for colleges and schools of pharmacy who have excelled at teaching, service and scholarship, facilitated by leadership support at their institutions and partnerships within their communities. This report outlines information about specific activities and approaches utilized by these institutions to inform and inspire others to do the same.

Community Pharmacy Centers of Excellence (COEs) Program

Background and Purpose

AACP and the ACT Pharmacy Collaborative created an action plan outlining the Academy's role in the urgent need for the transformation of community practice. One of the suggestions was that colleges and schools of pharmacy must promote community pharmacy practice as a valuable and worthy patient care setting that is deserving of peer and public respect to its administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

In February 2023, a working group was formed to discuss how to recognize colleges' and schools' achievements in community pharmacy practice. The group consisted of 12 faculty from different colleges and schools of pharmacy across the United States. Over the next year, the working group developed an application and selection process for a recognition called the ACT Community Pharmacy Centers of Excellence. This recognizes college/school commitment to community pharmacy advancement in four areas: teaching, service, scholarship, and leadership/partnership support.

In the area of teaching, colleges/schools were asked about didactic, experiential, and postgraduate training experiences. Applicants were asked how they incorporate elements of innovative community pharmacy practice throughout their curriculum – including both in the classroom and outside the classroom. They were also asked whether experiential programs place students in innovative community pharmacy practice settings and whether students have exposure to post-graduate opportunities in outpatient practice such as community-based residencies.

In the area of service, schools/colleges were asked if faculty practice direct patient care at a community pharmacy practice site or support community pharmacy practice transformation work across multiple practice sites. A description of the roles and responsibilities of those faculty members was also included in the application.

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For scholarship, colleges/schools were asked whether they conduct or support community pharmacy practice scholarship including practice transformation implementation or evaluation. A description of how projects are identified, implemented and how students or alumni are embedded into the research was of particular interest to the review committee.

The last part of the application asked about leadership support and engagement with external partners. The review committee was interested in learning how the college/school receives support from administrators of the university to support community pharmacy transformation. Of particular interest were fund raising activities, scholarship support for learners, hosting education sessions for preceptors and alumni, partnerships with policymakers and community-based stakeholders.

The application deadline for cohort 1 was May 2024. A total of 35 schools applied and 17 were formally recognized at the AACP Annual Meeting in July 2024 as ACT Community Pharmacy Centers of Excellence. A full list and description of the Centers can be found on the [AACP Website](#).

This program was made possible through financial support from the Community Pharmacy Foundation and service from the Community Pharmacy Centers of Excellence Working group members who developed the inaugural application and guidance for this program including: William (Bill) Doucette (co-lead), Stefanie Ferreri (co-lead), Jenny Bacci, Kim Coley, Bianca Daisy-Bell, Cody Clifton, Chris Daly, Kenneth Hohmeier, Nicholas Leon, Sarah Oprinovich, Sarah Ray, Jessica Robinson, Kate Rotzenberg, and Kayce Shealy.

Benefits of Being a Community Pharmacy Center of Excellence

The 17 colleges and schools were recognized as Centers of Excellence for mobilizing and amplifying community pharmacy practice transformation efforts. These trailblazers inspire and inform community pharmacy advancement across the pharmacy academy.² Many of the Centers of Excellence recipients have multiple faculty serving as ambassadors for community pharmacy academia through convenings with leaders in healthcare.

We wanted to develop a community of learning to share successes with and inspire others to learn. Since being named Centers of Excellence, faculty and administrators from these colleges and schools have met on a quarterly basis. Any faculty from a Center of Excellence was invited to exclusive networking opportunities. The goal of these convenings was to create a community of learning where success are shared and challenges are problem-solved together. These opportunities are intended to share learnings and inspire progressive, visionary discussion to meet the future needs of community pharmacy practice. The Centers share how they lead and influence discussion and collaboration regarding critical areas needed for community pharmacy transformation.

The AACP Transformation Center will continue to host the Centers of Excellence convenings on a quarterly basis. We encourage colleges/schools to think about how they can continue to improve in community pharmacy teaching, service, scholarship, leadership, and partnerships. Many of the initial applications received were well on their way to being recognized through this program. Those that fell short may have been missing documentation in one or two of the areas of the award criteria. This award recognizes school/college commitment and excellence to community pharmacy advancement in all four areas: teaching, service, scholarship, and leadership/partnership support.

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Description of Current COEs

Who They Are

Institutions from the first cohort varied in location, size, and many factors, but all represented excellence in community pharmacy efforts. The table below highlights characteristics of these 17 institutions, including their number of community-based pharmacy focused faculty and community-based pharmacy residency positions. The data included within this table represents academic year 2023–2024 (AY23–24) at the time of initial application submission.

Table 1: Inaugural ACT Community Pharmacy Centers of Excellence

Center of Excellence	Public or Private	Number of Faculty Focused on Community-based Pharmacy (>50%, <50%) (AY23–24)	Number of Community Pharmacy Residency Positions	Contact Name and Email
Ohio Northern University, Raabe College of Pharmacy Ada, OH	Private	3, 4	2	Stuart Beatty s-beatty@onu.edu
Ohio State University, College of Pharmacy Columbus, OH	Public	5, 7	3	Bella Mehta mehta.6@osu.edu
Purdue University, College of Pharmacy West Lafayette/Indianapolis, IN	Public	3, 6	5	Nicole Olenik moore337@purdue.edu
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, College of Pharmacy Little Rock, AR	Public	5, 6	6	Megan Smith msmith4@uams.edu
University of Iowa, College of Pharmacy Iowa City, IA	Public	3, 5	4	William Doucette william-doucette@uiowa.edu
University of Kentucky, College of Pharmacy Lexington, KY	Public	0, 7	3	Brooke Hudspeth brooke.hudspeth@uky.edu
University of Maryland, School of Pharmacy Baltimore, MD	Public	3, 3	2	Cherokee Layson-Wolf cwolf@rx.umaryland.edu

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Center of Excellence	Public or Private	Number of Faculty Focused on Community-based Pharmacy (>50%, <50%) (AY23-24)	Number of Community Pharmacy Residency Positions	Contact Name and Email
<u>University of Mississippi, School of Pharmacy</u> Oxford, MS	Public	7, 9	3	Lindsey Miller lemille2@olemiss.edu
<u>University of Missouri-Kansas City, School of Pharmacy</u> Kansas City, MO	Public	1, 4	3	Sarah Oprinovich oprinovichs@umkc.edu
<u>University of North Carolina, Eshelman School of Pharmacy</u> Chapel Hill, NC	Public	5, 3	14	Stefanie Ferreri stefanie_ferreri@unc.edu
<u>University of Pittsburgh, School of Pharmacy</u> Pittsburgh, PA	Public	5, 4	0	Kim Coley coley@pitt.edu
<u>University of South Carolina, College of Pharmacy</u> Columbia, SC	Public	5, 2	5	Jordan Ballou jmballou@sc.edu
<u>University of Texas at Austin, College of Pharmacy</u> Austin, TX	Public	6, 0	7	Terry Weaver t.weaver@austin.utexas.edu
<u>University of Washington, School of Pharmacy</u> Seattle, WA	Public	3, 2	2	Jennifer Bacci jbacci@uw.edu
<u>Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Pharmacy</u> Richmond, VA	Public	9, 3	4	Jean-Venable R. Goode jrgoode@vcu.edu
<u>Western University of Health Sciences, College of Pharmacy</u> Pomona, CA	Private	4, 0	3	Micah Hata mhata@westernu.edu
<u>Wilkes University, Nesbitt School of Pharmacy</u> Wilkes-Barre, PA	Private	2, 1	1	Jon Ference jonathan.ference@wilkes.edu

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Many of the themes found across the 17 Centers of Excellence covered multiple areas in scholarship, teaching, leadership/partnership, and service. Many institutions focused on strategies that align these various areas. The table below highlights themes seen at the current Centers of Excellence and their alignment in the four key application areas. Universal themes were identified across all Centers, followed by common themes identified at the majority of the Centers. Additional approaches were identified from select Centers to highlight innovative approaches.

Figure 1: Universal, Common, and Additional Themes of the ACT Community Pharmacy Centers of Excellence

	Scholarship	Teaching	Leadership/ Partnership	Service
Universal Themes (All Centers)				
Connection with state and national groups/initiatives to support community pharmacy (ACT, CPESN Partnership, State Pharmacy Associations, etc.)	X	X	X	X
Faculty involvement in community pharmacy practice (committed core of multiple faculty)	X	X	X	X
Community partnerships (faculty practice sites, research partners, organizational partners)	X	X	X	X
Trainee involvement in community-pharmacy research (students, residents, fellows)	X	X	X	X
Dissemination of community-pharmacy research and projects (publications, posters, presentations)	X	X	X	
Funding for community pharmacy research/projects	X		X	X
Incorporation into curriculum across all years (elective courses, specialized tracks, innovative assessments, didactic, experiential)		X	X	
Common Themes (Many Centers)				
Post-Graduate Training (Community-based Pharmacy Residency Programs and/or Fellowships)	X	X	X	X
University/Administrative support & incorporation of community-based pharmacy into strategic plan	X	X	X	X
Non-faculty community pharmacist involvement	X	X	X	X

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	Scholarship	Teaching	Leadership/ Partnership	Service
Community-focused workgroups and task forces	X	X	X	X
Community-focused scholarship/transformation centers	X		X	X
ACT Curriculum Framework Use		X	X	
Additional Themes (Innovative Approaches)				
Institutional funds for community-based activities	X	X	X	X
Hosting events related to community-based practice			X	X
Community-based Practice-based research network	X		X	X
Emphasis on student and faculty development in community-based areas		X	X	
University/College/School run community pharmacy or patient care service		X	X	X

Several themes which cover all areas of scholarship, teaching, leadership/partnership, and service were found at all 17 Centers of Excellence. These themes included:

1. Connections with state and national groups or initiatives which support community pharmacy such as ACT or CPESN
2. A committed core of faculty involved in community pharmacy practice
3. Community partnerships including faculty practice sites, research partners, and organizational partners
4. Trainee involvement in community-pharmacy research, including students, residents and fellows

Other themes which covered all areas that were commonly seen at Centers of Excellence included:

1. Post-Graduate training opportunities such as residencies and fellowships
2. University or administrative support and incorporation of community-based pharmacy into the strategic plan
3. Non-faculty community pharmacist involvement
4. Community-focused workgroups and task forces

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Core Strategies for Excellence

In the area of **Teaching**, an example of excellence is incorporating the [ACT Community Pharmacy Practice Transformation Curricular Framework](#) into the PharmD curriculum. This framework describes six domains that can guide changes made in PharmD curricula and courses. The six domains are 1) the community pharmacist practitioner, 2) evidence-based community pharmacy services, 3) extended care team, community partners and payors, 4) caring for populations and communities, 5) pharmacy workflow and technology and 6) vision, sustainability & scalability.³ For example, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has discussed the framework among faculty and subsequently used it as a cornerstone in their PharmD curriculum redesign process. Thus, they developed a competency statement focused on their pharmacy graduates having tools to be pioneers and advocates for the future of pharmacy practice.

In the area of **Scholarship**, a key approach has been to embrace a robust cycle of scholarship that includes project planning, grant writing & obtaining funding, project implementation, evaluation and data collection, as well as reporting and disseminating findings through presentations and publications. These actions are supported by having enough faculty engaged in scholarship involving community pharmacy practice. An example here is the University of North Carolina who has numerous faculty members involved in community practice scholarship. They have been productive across the scholarship process and have led many projects advancing our understanding of community pharmacy.

For **Service, Leadership and Partnership**, a key was to foster collaborative relationships with a diversity of community pharmacy leaders. One common example was to work with a state or regional Community Pharmacy Enhanced Service network (CPESN). The colleges/schools of pharmacy have been working with CPESNs to support practice changes, advanced student experiences and community pharmacy research. Other partnerships have addressed student experiences (e.g. with public health agencies), developed state pharmacy initiatives (e.g. with state pharmacy associations) and supported community pharmacy practice change (e.g. with state departments of health and human services). Some of the Center of Excellence colleges/schools have developed a center that serves to integrate various activities that involve community pharmacy practice. For example, Virginia Commonwealth University has a Center of Pharmacy Practice Innovation that has addressed community pharmacies in their efforts to develop, implement and evaluate innovative and sustainable models of pharmacy practice.

Recommendations to Achieve Community Pharmacy Excellence

The ACT Community Pharmacy Centers of Excellence are each unique in how they excel in areas of teaching, service, scholarship, and leadership/partnership. Our review highlighted notable commonalities and patterns indicating the types of practices that may serve other colleges/schools of pharmacy in enhancing their own impact in advancing community pharmacy practice and education.

Key Approaches for Impact

Colleges and schools of pharmacy looking to enhance their impact should focus on the seven universal approaches utilized by all 17 Centers of Excellence, as outlined in Figure 1 under “Universal Themes (All Centers).” Based on a self-assessment, if the majority of these are already in place, a program may then

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progress to the “Common Themes (Many Centers)” list. To further distinguish themselves, the program may then supplement with approaches from the “Additional Themes (Innovative Attributes)” list or develop innovative, unique practices tailored to their specific areas of interest or specialization.

Maximizing Impact Across Key Areas

Pharmacy colleges/schools should also consider prioritizing activities that enhance their efforts across all or most areas of interest: teaching, service, scholarship, and leadership/partnership. The approaches that span three to four of the areas result in the most impact, while maximizing efficiency of faculty and staff resources.

It Takes Continued Time and Focus

As institutions start this journey, it is important to remember that this will take time. Success may not be seen overnight – and that is okay! This reminder is important to keep up the work and dedication to advance community pharmacy practice in academia. Many of the current Centers of Excellence have been on their journeys for many years and still are still striving to grow, but there is an opportunity for colleges/schools to learn from each other. Each step of the way is progress and an important part of achieving the vision.

It is a Team Effort

Having a strong team is key to successful implementation of many of the strategies discussed. It is also important that this team consists of representatives from several groups both internal and external to the institution. A core group of dedicated community-based faculty at the school creates the vision and foundational work (i.e., partnerships, research, and teaching) to build upon. While the exact number of community-based faculty may vary from institution to institution, it is important to have more than one single person dedicated to the community-based practice advancement efforts. The next important step is support from leadership and administration within the institution. This support may come in different forms, some examples seen at current Centers of Excellence include inclusion of community-based practice advancement within the strategic plan, specific funds dedicated to community-based efforts, and development of workgroups and taskforces.

Partnerships Matter

Lastly, external partnerships are another key part of this process. Getting internal and external stakeholders involved with community pharmacy practice transformation will set colleges/schools apart. Partners may include faculty practice sites, scholarship and research partners within the community, student and resident experiential sites, local organizations, and national organizations. Development of relationships with these partners is critical to the advancement of community-based pharmacy practice. This vision is a large undertaking that cannot be achieved by one person alone. The development of a strong and dedicated team is a key practice seen across the current Centers of Excellence.

Based on our review, we found that the leadership/partnership area was the foundation for the other three areas. Many of the universal and common themes seen at Centers of Excellence rely heavily on securing support from administrators at the college/school and nurturing external partnerships. A good place to start with leadership support would be to begin having conversations about how community pharmacy could

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be included in the college/school's strategic plan, using all the reasons articulated in the introduction of the report to make this case. This approach will allow an opportunity to advocate for faculty/staff time and resources to be allocated to this work. In terms of external partnerships, these may look different at each institution. However, one thing is universal: relationship building is the key to success. It is essential that these partnerships are truly a collaboration, not just a transactional relationship. Building these relationships does take time, and leadership at colleges/schools must be willing to support their faculty in doing this work for the long haul. Time investment in developing these partnerships is needed. Some ways to accomplish this may include meeting the practitioner or organization where they are and building the relationship from there, bringing partners into spaces where they can share their expertise, and identifying the strengths of partners and those that align with your vision to move community pharmacy practice forward. In building these relationships, it is important to acknowledge that there may be limitations, including time commitment, culture differences, and preferences. In setting the foundation for these partnerships, seek compromises that meet the needs of all parties: academicians, practicing pharmacists, practice and administrative support, and patients.

By building strong partnerships with key players outside of the institution, the door is opened to implement many of the themes seen at Centers of Excellence and those themes that align across scholarship, teaching, leadership/partnership, and service.

Call to Action

Community pharmacy practice is rapidly changing with pharmacy closures, new business models of patient care, increasing demands of the public for access to care, declining primary care providers, and new medication and digital therapies. Change also creates a significant need and opportunity for leadership, innovation, and new graduates to foster evolution of practice. Every college/school of pharmacy has the responsibility and the potential to inspire the future of the front door of the profession through teaching, leadership experiences, engaging experiential learning, and research in community practice. The 17 Centers of Excellence have demonstrated it is possible in a variety of academic settings with unique approaches.

The ACT Pharmacy Collaborative calls on ALL colleges/schools of pharmacy to join in on the mission to advance community pharmacy practice and inspire this next generation of future pharmacists to embrace community pharmacy practice as a destination of choice. Use the Centers of Excellence as a roadmap to further engage the strengths of your college/school of pharmacy through aligning the effort of teaching, service and research to focus on community pharmacy practice, embrace and enhance partnerships with preceptors, employers and alumni, while collaborating with faculty and staff within the pharmacy program and the university who can all contribute to advancing community practice. Our profession's future and the health of our nation depend on inspiring new leaders who serve our community each day.

References

1. [American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. ACT \(Academia-Community Transformation\) Pharmacy Collaborative; 2025. Accessed July 2025.](#)
2. [American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. ACT Pharmacy Collaborative Community Pharmacy Centers of Excellence; 2024. Accessed July 2025.](#)
3. [American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. Community Pharmacy Practice Transformation: Curricular Framework; 2024. Accessed July 2025.](#)