



Integrating Professional Efforts into a Life Well-Lived: A REFLECTION AND RESOURCE GUIDE FOR FACULTY

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The 2025–2026 AACP Council of Faculties Faculty Affairs Standing Committee was charged by Council of Faculties Chair Jeff Cain to develop a guidance document on sustainable productivity practices that faculty can adopt to work efficiently and with impact—without overworking or sacrificing personal well-being. The following committee members contributed to the development of this guide:

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The Council of Faculties (COF) Faculty Affairs Committee is the owner of this document.

Welcome!

We're so glad you're here! If you've picked up this guide, we imagine you could use a break, or a nap, or a vacation! Pharmacy faculty often demonstrate strong expertise and dedication—qualities you likely bring to your work in teaching, discovery, or pharmacy practice.

Maybe you're relatively new to academia, and you're eager to get started on the right foot. You're feeling excited, curious, and also maybe a little overwhelmed.

Or maybe you're a decade or two into academia, and you're desperate for a different approach. You're not sure you can continue with another semester like this one, and all you know is emotional exhaustion.¹ You've given up trying to improve the system, and now you're just trying not to lose your sanity. You know something has to give, but you're just not sure what.

In academic pharmacy, burnout is a recognized hazard, and professional organizations, including the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP), have released guidance on overcoming the challenge of burnout.²⁻⁵ Faculty/staff wellness and well-being, including promoting a sense of belonging, has been added to the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education accreditation standards.⁶ Despite the guidance and standards, the question remains as to how academicians can focus on personal well-being without compromising patient outcomes, student needs, service, and scholarly pursuits.⁷

Being a professor is hard. It's hard when you're new, drinking from the firehose as you immerse yourself in pedagogy, research, and committee service. It's hard when you realize, in your excitement, you've said yes to too many things and you're in over your head. It's hard when you've been promoted to associate, but you're not sure you have the stamina needed to work towards another promotion. It's hard when you have questions, but don't feel like you know anyone willing to listen without giving scripted answers. In case it hasn't sunk in yet, we'll say it again—Being a professor is hard.

As you might tell your students when they are wrestling with a new subject in class, discomfort is often a catalyst for growth. Liminal space—the space between not knowing and knowing—is fertile ground for learning.^{8,9}

You are not alone! We have been in your seat and are now just a few steps ahead. Our hope is to meet you where you are and share some things we've learned along the way. We'd like to pass along some wisdom and practices you can adopt to work efficiently and with impact—without overworking or sacrificing personal well-being. Our hope is for you to integrate your professional efforts into a life well-lived.¹⁰

This guide was authored by members of the 2025–2026 AACCP COF Faculty Affairs Committee. Committee members are either PharmD or PhD trained, have between 3 and 30 years of experience as pharmacy educators and administrators at colleges and schools of pharmacy—public and private, small and large, research-focused and teaching-focused. Their roles include everything from adjuncts to clinical track, teaching track and tenure track.

A Few Things to Keep in Mind as You Use This Guide

1. **There's no one-size-fits-all approach to faculty life.** We've shared several ideas and resources here, but we can't tell you which ones will work for you. There is a wealth of advice on productivity and wellness, which can make it difficult to know where to start. This leads us to our second point...
2. **A healthy relationship with work develops over time, not all at once.** It might take weeks or even years of trial and error to figure out which strategies will help you achieve a sustainable balance. It's ok to begin by taking small steps and seeing what helps.
3. **The culture of your institution plays a significant role in your ability to be well.** Many efforts to address burnout in academia place too much emphasis on individuals and not enough of it on the environments

in which they work.¹¹ We strongly believe leaders have a responsibility to those in their care: their employees.¹² Providing access to mindfulness training or promoting self-care strategies will not mend cultures where overwork is the norm and being busy means you're valuable.^{10,11} Personal resources are insufficient for overcoming many of the demands faculty face (Figure).¹¹

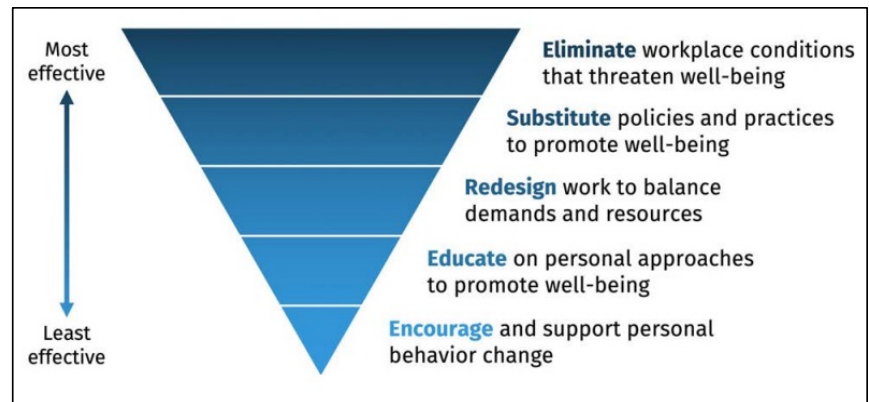


Figure. Hierarchy of Controls for Well-Being Strategies^{5,13}

4. **When using this guide, we invite you to focus on what is within your control rather than what lies beyond it.** Our goal is to provide practical resources that help you reclaim a sense of agency and foster fulfillment and well-being across all aspects of life. While institutional changes and systemic interventions are important, they are addressed elsewhere.^{5,11} This guide is about empowering you to take meaningful steps where you have influence.

How to Use This Guide

We have divided this guide into three parts. In Part 1, we invite you to take a deeper look at how you spend your time and energy—both at work and outside of it through a series of reflection questions. These prompts are not meant to be answered exhaustively or “correctly.” Instead, they’re intended to spark insight and awaken self-awareness about what feels aligned, sustainable, and meaningful for you.

In Part 2, we share some example mindsets, strategies, and behaviors which have helped us in our journeys. **Mindsets** are ways we think about ourselves, our relationships, our responsibilities, and how we respond to challenges and opportunities. A shift in one’s mindset is like putting on a new pair of glasses through which we see the world and can significantly shape the way we live. **Strategies** are ways we have claimed self-agency in our lives. These intentional actions and boundaries can help us manage demands, regulate stress, pursue goals, and protect time for the things that bring the most meaning to our lives, both at work and outside of it. **Behaviors** are the observable ways we show up in the world, or what others see when they interact with us (e.g., what you do, how you respond).

We have adopted the NCFDD (formerly National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity) Core Competencies for Faculty Framework¹⁴ to organize the mindsets, strategies, and behaviors we’ve shared. NCFDD is a leading provider of professional development in higher education. Their programming for faculty focuses on “four key areas that help achieve extraordinary writing and research productivity while maintaining a full and healthy life off campus.” You can read more about the Core Competencies for Faculty Framework at the start of Part 2 of this guide.

Part 3 is a list of resources from the academic and popular press on the topic of faculty life. These are resources that have helped us survive and thrive in our own careers. While we admit the list of strategies and resources shared is not comprehensive, we hope something will speak to and encourage you, whether you’re at the starting point or at an inflection point in your journey in pharmacy education.

Finally, while this document is intended to be helpful for you as an individual, we highly encourage you to share what you’re learning about yourself with a trusted friend, colleague, mentor, or boss. What you learn here may be helpful or even instrumental in shaping your future career, and we hope you use it to start meaningful conversations that lead to a more fulfilling career.

We’re so glad you’re here. Let’s begin.

Part 1: Reflection Questions

These reflection questions are designed to invite you to take a deeper look at how you spend your time and energy—both at work and outside of it.

These prompts are not meant to be answered exhaustively or “correctly.” Instead, they’re intended to spark insight and guide self-awareness about what feels aligned, sustainable, and meaningful for you.

A few guiding points as you begin:

- **Take a deep dive.** Be curious and honest about where your time and energy really go—what feels fulfilling, what feels draining, and what may be missing.
- **You don’t have to know it all.** It’s okay if some questions raise uncertainty or highlight areas you haven’t considered before.
- **Follow what resonates.** You don’t need to answer every prompt. Focus on the ones that feel most relevant or revealing for you.
- **Use this as a guide.** Let these reflections help you clarify what matters most, where you may need to adjust expectations, and how to better align your work and life in ways that support both effectiveness and well-being.
- **Progress beats perfection.** Perfection isn’t the goal. This isn’t about producing a finished document—rather, begin to identify patterns, priorities, and opportunities for greater balance and sustainability

Reflections on Who You Are

What are your values?

If you’ve never thought about your values before, here is [one exercise](#) to try.

What is your personal mission, or your personal “why”?¹⁵

What else do you know about yourself and how you engage with the world that will be important to consider?

Examples: I'm an extrovert or introvert, I'm an enneagram 3, I am neurotypical or neurodivergent, I am an internal or external thinker, I get bored easily, I prefer flexibility or structure. (No need to include things about your other roles yet (e.g., parent, friend, daughter, ultramarathoner, volunteer, chef). We will get to questions about those things in the Reflections on Life Outside of Work part below.)

What does your ideal workday look like?

What do you do before work? (Go for a run? Journal? Make a cup of tea?). What do you work on during the day? (Meeting with student mentee, have coffee with a colleague, make progress on a manuscript, lunch with work bestie, have time to read an interesting article, etc.?) What time do you leave and what do you do in the evening?

Reflections on Your Current Work Situation

Write down EVERYTHING you do at work.

This might include things like classroom teaching, mentoring, scholarship, clinical service, university/department service, professional service, administrative leadership, etc. Include not only things that are your primary responsibility, but also things you are doing that were not officially assigned to you. Consider looking through your calendar or to do list to remember all the things you've done. There is no right way to organize this: by month, by semester... whatever works for you.

Once you've finished, look through the list.

Is there alignment between what you're actually spending your time on and your "distribution of effort" (approximate percent effort across teaching, research/scholarship, service, and other activities) or job description? If there are areas that do not align, think about why.

What are YOUR non-negotiables at work?

These are things that are meaningful to you that you want to make sure you spend time on or work toward. Examples: teaching a certain course/lab, working towards promotion, writing one article per year.

When you describe your work to someone, what do you emphasize first? What do you leave out?

Which parts of your job feel most central to your professional identity? Which feel peripheral or obligatory?

What do you think your employer thinks you do at work? If you have multiple “bosses,” where do you see similarities or conflicts in their expectations of you?

What are the non-negotiables from your employer? How have these non-negotiable expectations been communicated to you? Are they outlined in your job description or university or department guiding documents? Or perhaps are they “faculty lore” or informal norms?

Examples: teach X number of classes/lectures, serve on X, Y, and Z committees.

Reflections on Life Outside of Work

Write down EVERYTHING you do outside of work.

This might include things like family or caregiving commitments, hobbies, friendships, or self-care (physical, emotional, spiritual).

Once you've finished, look through the list. Which items take the most time? Which take the most energy?

What are your non-negotiables outside of work?

These are things that are meaningful to you that you want to make sure you spend time on (e.g., eating dinner with the family) or work toward (e.g., training for a race) or things that must be done whether you enjoy them or not (e.g., pay bills).

Reflections on Integration of Life

Our hope is to help you think about how you can integrate your professional efforts into a life well-lived.

Imagine one year from now. You have waved a magic wand and your life is “better.” How is it different than it is now?

Looking across all your reflections—work, life outside of work, and what you know about yourself—what patterns do you notice about where you gain energy, motivation, and satisfaction versus where you feel drained or hindered? How do these patterns align (or misalign) with your values, goals, and vision for a sustainable and fulfilling life?

Are there any tensions between your non-negotiables at work and your non-negotiables outside of work?

What things (negotiable and non-negotiable) do you participate in both at work and outside of work that excite you (and would like to do more of)?

What would you need to adjust or let go of to make it possible for you to do more of the things that add meaning to your life, or get one step closer to your “ideal” workday? **What are one or two insights or actions you could take to build on what energizes you and reduce what depletes you?**

Part 2: Example Mindsets, Strategies, and Behaviors to Adopt

Success in academia is about more than research output or teaching excellence. It also requires intentionally cultivating the mindsets, behaviors, and strategies that sustain productivity, well-being, and engagement over the long term.

Mindsets are ways we think about ourselves, our relationships, our responsibilities, and how we respond to challenges and opportunities. A shift in one's mindset is like putting on a new pair of glasses through which we see the world and can significantly shape the way we live. Strategies are ways we have claimed self-agency in our lives. These intentional actions and boundaries can help us manage demands, regulate stress, pursue goals, and protect time for the things that bring the most meaning to our lives, both at work and outside of it. Behaviors are the observable ways we show up in the world, or what others see when they interact with us (e.g., what you do, how you respond).

Aligning daily habits with proven, peer-tested practices can help faculty overcome isolation, manage time effectively, and navigate the hidden curriculum of academic life. For faculty seeking not just to survive but to thrive, this kind of intentional alignment starts with small steps—focus on incremental changes and pay attention to what truly enhances your energy, focus, and satisfaction. The example mindsets, behaviors, and strategies below highlight approaches that have been found effective by peers and authors in academic settings; they are not an exhaustive checklist but rather examples to help you consider what might work for you.

We have used the NCFDD (formerly National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity) Core Competencies for Faculty Framework¹⁴ to organize the Mindsets, Strategies, and Behaviors below. NCFDD's programming for faculty focuses on “four key areas that help achieve extraordinary writing and research productivity while maintaining a full and healthy life off campus”: strategic planning, productivity, healthy relationships, and work-life balance.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is essential for ensuring you align your time to your priorities for promotion, as well as your personal goals and well-being. This means every day, week and semester needs a plan. Taking the time to pause and develop a plan for your next season as faculty may feel like a luxury you can't afford right now. But your strategic plan can serve as your map for navigating a busy semester and help keep you on track when presented with new opportunities.¹⁴

Mindsets

- You are not your job; rather, it is something you do.
- You are a multi-dimensional human who wears many hats and plays different roles in life.
- You can be flexible and recognize that if something does not work this time and/or this way, there will be another time to try something different.
- You have done hard things, and you can do hard things (at least for a short time).
- You are capable of growing and developing (growth mindset) and can do that for a lifetime. Growth mindset includes the occurrence of failures, so long as you learn from them.
- Compare your current self to “past you” rather than to “others now.” Are you growing and developing?
- A “yes” to one thing means a “no” to something else. Tradeoffs are real and can be painful if decisions are made without considering them.

Strategies

- Consider your values, strengths, and limitations when making choices about where to put your energy.
- Take some time to reflect on how you are spending your time. You could use some type of task-capture system (Outlook, Trello) but even a simple paper to-do list works great. Consider using color coding to help visualize how you are spending your time. Set a time at the end of each semester to reflect on how you've spent your time and whether it aligned with your stated distribution of effort or position description.

- If your current workplace doesn't have a culture that aligns with your values, consider where you can influence things, or if it might be time to seek out a new role. When interviewing for a job, ask about their values, and how they care for their employees.
- Chop big tasks into smaller, manageable chunks that are not so intimidating, and can be done in smaller increments of unscheduled time.

Behaviors

- Set aside non-negotiable time for things that recharge you- exercise, meditation, time in nature, time with a partner, whatever that looks like for you.
- Use time off, including weekends, to recharge, not to catch up. If you find you need weekends to get your work done, it's probably time to start re-evaluating your commitments and responsibilities at work.

Productivity

Faculty have endless demands on their time, from teaching to service to research, never mind the emails. Important, but not urgent, tasks like writing and research are often delayed in the course of a normal week. Faculty need ideas for working strategically, prioritizing what to work on to minimize stress and stay on track. Building productivity habits early can improve your ability to manage your time, overcome perfectionism and reach your professional goals.

Mindsets

- Doing things slowly or intentionally to produce a quality outcome will save time in the long run over doing things quickly and then fixing them later.
- Recognize that some weeks require a narrower focus on a few high-priority tasks, and that's okay. Your work life has seasons to it.
- Lean on your faith, spirituality, or other outside source to remind yourself of your worth, especially when you're not feeling like you're meeting expectations at work.
- Productivity is a spectrum—some people are very productive, and others are less so. Many factors contribute to how productive one can be, and those factors can change day-to-day and week-to-week. Rather than comparing yourself to others, try to consider if you are personally satisfied with your current productivity in the context of all aspects of your life.
- Collaboration is much more effective than competition.
- It takes a lot of effort to prepare something you're 80% satisfied with. It takes almost as much effort to get that last 20% perfected. It's okay to have things be "good enough."
- It's also okay to ask for an (occasional) extension to complete work.
- There are often multiple good ways to proceed, so try to minimize time wasted searching for the "perfect" approach.
- Make peace with not getting everything done.

Strategies

- Look for opportunities to use one activity for multiple benefits, e.g., using scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) to combine teaching and research.
- One day each week, take intentional time to plan for both work and outside-of-work responsibilities. Prior to each semester, map projects across the semester in phases so you're not trying to do everything at once. When one task ends, that block of time rolls into the next priority.
- Schedule "Me-tings," time each week set aside to look at the week ahead to see what's coming, adjust meetings, move things around, know what documents you need, prepare for meetings, etc.
- Consider setting aside certain days for weekly meetings (e.g., on Monday and Tuesday) to allow more focused work time on other days (e.g., Thursday and Friday).

- Consider keeping your office door open as much as possible. This can allow for more casual conversation with coworkers or students. It also means that on the rare occasion it's closed, people will get the signal that you need space for uninterrupted work.
- Rather than updating your CV with each task you complete, consider setting time aside to update it monthly or quarterly. Keep a running list of organization work, volunteering, one-off teaching/facilitating, certificates, conferences, etc., so that you have them all in one place when you're ready to make the updates.

Behaviors

- Set your top 3 weekly priorities—if you get those 3 things done, you can call the week a success!
- Say “no” as often as possible to non-promotable work (tasks that are necessary for an organization to function but do not directly contribute to an individual's career advancement or promotion, e.g., serving on extra committees; mentoring beyond your assigned load; coordinating logistics for others' projects or courses)
- Plan for times of “deep work” when possible.
- Partner with others on scholarship pursuits to make the load lighter.
- Block time on your calendar for important tasks, especially if the tasks aren't urgent. i.e., scholarship, reading, planning for teaching, planning for service.
- Use distraction control tools, like “do not disturb mode” or minimizing pop up alerts or notifications. Even better, try closing your email window!
- Use a “parking lot” list to capture thoughts or distractions that come to mind during focused work. You can return to it once you're finished with the important work.
- Find an accountability partner to help you focus or keep your commitments to yourself or others.
- Ask questions when you're confused! In the long run, you can save yourself and others frustration and time.
- Consider how you can integrate generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) into your workflow. Can it help as a sounding board to refine ideas and materials? Or help you get unstuck when you hit writer's block?

Healthy Relationships

Healthy relationships are key to thriving in academia. You need mentors who can guide you, colleagues who respect your boundaries, and collaborators who share your values. Investing in these connections—and learning how to communicate clearly—can help you build a network that supports your success and well-being.¹⁴

Mindsets

- Communication is the key to all effective relationships.
- “Clear is kind.” Say what you mean, and mean what you say.
- Assume the best of others. Or if you're not sure what their intentions are, ask!
- Invest in networking intentionally! Attend departmental events, conferences, and informal gatherings with purpose.
- Feedback from mentors is going to help you grow—seek it out regularly (more often than annually!)

Strategies

- You can seek out mentors internally and externally, and for different purposes (teaching, clinical service, research, etc).
- Explore mentoring programs available through professional organizations.
- Consider seeing a counselor to reflect on how you can have healthier relationships at work and outside of work.
- Consider if you need to update your advice network as your position, responsibilities, or goals change.
- Have a ritual to switch from work to personal mode, like listening to a certain song on your drive home.

Behaviors

- Ask for help. Acknowledging you don't have all the answers can go a long way at modeling help-seeking behavior to others, AND you might learn something new!
- Recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of others. This could mean sending a quick email when you see they've published a manuscript or letting them know you've heard students talking about how helpful their active learning session was.
- Use your network for collaborative sharing (or even the occasional venting!) as a way to reduce stress and feeling less alone.
- Connect with colleagues from other colleges of pharmacy or at other colleges at your institution. They're likely facing similar issues to you.
- Offer help to others when possible. Small acts of support—like sharing resources or reviewing drafts—go a long way.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance isn't about doing everything perfectly—it's about making choices that protect your energy and joy. Setting boundaries around your time and saying "no" when needed can feel hard, but it's essential for sustainability. When you prioritize rest and renewal, you're not just caring for yourself—you're setting yourself up for long-term success.¹⁴

Mindsets

- You need to be at your best if you hope to help others. As with an emergency on an airplane, you should be sure to put on your oxygen mask first so that you can help others.
- Everything is likely not going to be balanced all the time...that is okay! Your work life will have seasons; embrace the seasonality.
- You're unique, so it's reasonable that how you choose to balance your work with your other commitments will be unique too.

Strategies

- Go back to your values, your personal mission, or your personal "why" to help guide you on choosing where to spend your energy.
- Consider keeping a Faculty Energy Budget—track weekly "energy deposits" (restorative activities) and "energy withdrawals" (work demands). Use the results to monitor balance and start conversations with your department chair about workload.
- Set boundaries, such as picking your kids up from school four days a week. Block those times in Outlook and treat them as hard commitments—a practice that helps keep work integrated into life, not the other way around.

Behaviors

- Consider taking your work email off your personal phone.
- When you are not at work, put your phone in a different room and don't check it.
- Take an unplugged vacation at least once per year.
- If you send an email outside normal hours, schedule it to be delivered the next morning. This subtly reinforces that you protect others' time and are not going to respond after hours.

Part 3: Resources for Getting Started

Faculty well-being and productivity are supported not by the number of resources we consume, but by how intentionally we use them. Remember, buying a book, reading a book, listening to a podcast, or participating in a program isn't what truly makes the difference. The real impact comes from pausing to reflect and intentionally aligning your time, energy, and actions with your core values. That alignment is what sustains meaningful work and personal fulfillment.

Strategic Planning

- Essentialism: How to say no and prioritize what matters (Greg McKeown)
- Mindset: The New Psychology of Success (Carol Dweck)
- Self-Awareness Assessments:
 - CliftonStrengths Online Talent Assessment—identify your strengths and reflect on how to use them to contribute—\$25
 - Working Genius Assessment - identify strengths/opportunities for working on your own/in teams—\$25

Productivity

- Before Breakfast Podcast (Laura Vanderkam)
- Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World (Cal Newport)
- Eat that Frog: 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time (Brian Tracy)
- Excellence, Actually Podcast (Steve Magness, Brad Stulberg, and Clay Skipper)
- Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals (Oliver Burkeman)
- Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity (David Allen)
- Hyperfocus (Chris Bailey)
- Peak Performance: Elevate Your Game, Avoid Burnout, and Thrive with the New Science of Success (Brad Stulberg and Steve Magness)
- Slow Productivity (Cal Newport)
- The Imperfectionist newsletter (Oliver Burkeman)
- Work Life Podcast (Adam Grant)

Healthy Relationships

- Seppälä E, McNichols NK. The Power of Healthy Relationships at Work. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2022/06/the-power-of-healthy-relationships-at-work>
- Soundtracks: The Surprising Solution to Overthinking (Jon Acuff)

Work-Life Balance

- From Strength to Strength: Finding Success, Happiness, and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life (Arthur Brooks)
- Rest: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less (Alex Soojung & Kim Pang)
- The No Club: Putting a Stop to Women's Dead-End Work (Linda Babcock, Brenda Peyser, Lise Vesterlund, and Laurie Weingart)
- The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy (Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber)

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About AACCP

AACP Mission

Advance pharmacy education, research, scholarship, practice and service, in partnership with members and stakeholders, to improve health for all.

AACP Vision

We envision a world of healthy people through the transformation of health professions education.

AACP Inclusiveness and Belonging Statement

The Association affirms its commitment to fostering an inclusive community and leveraging our differences in thought, background, perspective, and experience to advance pharmacy education and improve health.

AACP Core Values



Advocacy We strive to help key stakeholders understand the value of pharmacy educators and education.

Collaboration We seek and maintain alliances with those who share our objectives and ideals and with whom we can pursue mutual goals.

Excellence We pursue the highest level of achievement in all aspects of our work.

Foresight We recognize the strides and advancements we can accomplish when guided by visionary individuals.

Inclusiveness All individuals have perspectives that we appreciate and represent in our work.

Innovation We embrace new ideas, experiment, and lead positive change in the world.

Integrity We fulfill our responsibilities in accordance with the highest ethical standards.

Learning We foster an environment that encourages continuous exploration and enlightenment.