

ATSU AHEC Strategic Plan FY 2021 – 2026

“Connecting and Developing”

Introduction

On October 1, 1988, A. T. Still University (ATSU), then Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (KCOM), received the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) funding from the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) to establish ATSU AHEC Program Office, the longest standing first AHEC Program Office in Missouri. Since then, ATSU AHEC Program Office helped establish two other AHEC Program Offices at the University of Missouri and St. Louis University, and seven regional AHEC offices across the state. Collaboratively, the Missouri AHEC (MAHEC) network has been committed to enhancing access to quality healthcare, particularly primary and preventive care, by growing and supporting Missouri’s healthcare workforce for over 30 years. The community-academic linkages that the MAHEC network has created provide unique values to develop a successful healthcare workforce, indicating the great impact on connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health.

Over 30 years, the health system and health practice in the United States have experienced drastic changes, and medical, dental, and health education needs to adapt to a constantly changing environment. ATSU AHEC has been able to add unique values to ATSU’s medical, dental, and health education. In addition to its connection with a wide range of communities across Missouri and beyond, ATSU AHEC programs support KCOM/MOSDOH (Missouri School of Dental and Oral Health) curricula in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to, offering interprofessional classes across campuses and universities, placing medical students for their clinical rotations and community experiences, providing health and wellness courses in communities, organizing health events in communities, bringing potential students to campus, and cultivating students’ interests in health and science while they are in high schools and colleges.

ATSU AHEC has lived strong for over 30 years and always adapts to the constantly changing environment. HRSA’s signature program, the AHEC Scholars Program, was launched across the nation in 2017, and new requirements have been added for AHEC grant recipients. As the only AHEC grant recipient in Missouri in this HRSA funding cycle (2017-2022), ATSU AHEC has been instrumental in building a Missouri AHEC Scholars infrastructure from the ground up and leads the effort to implement

AHEC Scholars Program activities along with the other two Program Offices and seven regional AHEC offices. With the approach of Healthy People 2020 and development of Healthy People 2030, a new era of health education and practice is under way in the United States. ATSU AHEC's leadership is in transition as well. A new strategic plan is needed to help the ATSU AHEC stay focused and on track. At the ATSU AHEC Internal Advisory Committee meeting in February, 2019, our committee members also recommended developing a new strategic plan to respond to changes.

The new strategic plan, the product of three months' effort in late 2019, contributed to by all ATSU AHEC staff and facilitated by Dr. John Gardner, sets out its vision of AHEC, bringing the health and wellbeing of underserved communities and populations to the fore. This vision necessitates a complex agenda: one that requires coordinated strategies, many actors and numerous steps for implementation. Its core values include community health & wellbeing, interprofessional collaboration, adaptability and cultural responsibility. Due to the impact by COVID-19, the team revisited the strategic plan in September 2021 and decided to move the strategic plan period to FY 2021-2026, starting July 2021 to make sure that each activity is on track.

While working on the new AHEC strategic plan, we consulted the ATSU and KCOM strategic plans, tried to align the new plan's objectives with their strategic goals and identified potential AHEC activities that were related to ATSU's core professional attributes (CPAs), including critical thinking, cultural proficiency, interprofessional collaboration, interpersonal skills and social responsibility. The strategic plan cannot address all issues, but it can and does identify the directions in which to go and the means by which to get there. This strategic plan will serve as a road map for a journey that will continue align the energy, resources, and efforts of ATSU AHEC.

ATSU AHEC Strategic Plan Process

ATSU AHEC went through a strategic planning process to develop a consistent plan to move the organization forward over the next five years. The strength of ATSU AHEC is the process of continual evaluation and improvement. The strategic planning process has allowed the organization to develop targeted goals to move the organization forward in an intentional way.

The strategic planning process was multi-faceted. It was determined a vision statement and core values needed to be developed to assist in guiding the strategic planning process. Additionally, an assessment of the current status of ATSU AHEC was conducted through a strengths, weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Lastly, the objectives, strategies, tactics, and measurements of the strategic plan were shaped using the mission, vision, core values, and SWOT analysis.

The resulting strategic plan should position ATSU AHEC to be more integrated into the ATSU community, develop better partnerships within ATSU and beyond, and develop a more efficient team oriented approach to achieving the mission and vision. The strategic plan is action oriented with specific benchmarks each year and cross objective alignment.

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ATSU AHEC Mission

To support and enhance ATSU-KCOM's efforts to train primary care physicians and other health professionals who are well suited to practice in all communities, but especially in rural and underserved areas, and to coordinate ATSU-KCOM's activities and programs with those of the participating schools and regional centers that comprise the MAHEC network.

ATSU AHEC Vision

ATSU AHEC will be an ATSU center of excellence enhancing the health and wellbeing of underserved communities and populations.

ATSU AHEC Core Values

Community Health & Wellbeing

ATSU AHEC values the health of all communities and the wellbeing of their members.

Interprofessional Collaboration

ATSU AHEC values an interdisciplinary approach to education and health practices.

Adaptability

ATSU AHEC values responsiveness to changes in community needs.

Cultural Proficiency

ATSU AHEC values recognition, inclusion, and respect of all cultures.

Strategic Planning Objectives

ATSU AHEC developed five strategic planning objectives. Each objective is supported by multiple strategies, tactics, and measurements. This plan provides a step-by-step process over the five years of the strategic plan in order to achieve each of the objectives. While each of the objectives stands on its own merits, there is a collaborative component to the set of five objectives. The ATSU AHEC strategic planning committee focused on broader themes of telling its story through a more compelling narrative and development.

Telling the ATSU AHEC story

ATSU AHEC has a powerful story to share. Whether it is the success stories of those who have participated in the program or the ongoing contribution to its community. However, the complexity of data analysis, marketing, and disparate programs have watered down the narrative. It has become difficult for many to see and understand the terrific value ATSU AHEC provides to ATSU and its community. This strategic plan will strengthen ATSU AHEC’s narrative resulting in a more powerful product.

Development

A program like ATSU AHEC is always about development. Students, participants, and staff all have the opportunity to develop by engaging in ATSU AHEC’s services. Interprofessional education and practice is an aspect of development which is paramount to the future of medical education and practice and ATSU AHEC. Through intentional focus on interprofessional development, ATSU AHEC can better serve students, participants, and staff alike.

	Objectives
Objective 1	Increase visibility and awareness of ATSU AHEC for internal ATSU partners
Objective 2	Improve evaluation processes in order to demonstrate the value of ATSU AHEC to ATSU
Objective 3	Strengthen ATSU AHEC partnerships with individuals engaged in interprofessional education and practice
Objective 4	Increase participation in ATSU AHEC programs through stabilization and expanded partnerships
Objective 5	Increase knowledge and skillsets across ATSU AHEC staff

Objective 1

Objective 1	Increase visibility and awareness of ATSU AHEC for internal ATSU partners
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ATSU AHEC, through this strategic plan, strives to increase awareness of ATSU AHEC services, processes, and successes. ATSU AHEC provides great value to the ATSU community. Recently, the programs and benefits of ATSU AHEC have not been communicated to internal partners consistently. By educating ATSU partners on ATSU AHEC activities, the vision and mission can better be achieved through increased knowledge of the organization. ATSU AHEC must help partners understand how ATSU and healthcare education has benefited from ATSU AHEC.

Strategy 1.1	Identify opportunities for ATSU AHEC to present within ATSU		
Tactics	1.1.1: Reach out to ATSU partners offering presentations	1.1.2: Develop a standard presentation template	1.1.3: Tailor presentation to meet ATSU partner needs
Timeline	Year One	Year One	Continual
Measurements	Potential presentation opportunities		
	Actual presentations delivered		

Strategy 1.2	Develop new publication material to share within ATSU		
Tactics	1.2.1: Partner with Communications & Marketing to develop branding	1.2.2: Identify virtual and hard copy material to develop	1.2.3: Create consistent messaging across programs and materials
Timeline	Year One	Year Two	Continual
Measurements	Development of an ATSU AHEC Brand		
	New hard copy materials developed		
	New virtual materials developed		
	Website updated		
	Survey how students, faculty, and staff learned of ATSU AHEC		

Strategy 1.3	Engage in ATSU community	
Tactics	1.3.1: Encourage ATSU AHEC staff to serve on ATSU committees in order to be more present within the university	1.3.2: Engage with student organizations (serve as an advisor, connect shared interests, etc.)
Timeline	Year Two	Year Three
Measurements	Identified potential committee memberships	
	Committees served on	

	Connections with student organizations (advise, assisting with organization efforts, etc.)
	Support student research efforts
	Presence at large-scale ATSU events

Strategy 1.4	Identify champions or ambassadors to promote ATSU AHEC		
Tactics	1.4.1: Create a set of expectations for ambassadors or champions	1.4.2: Connect with internal advisory committee members on champion and ambassador role	1.4.3: Connect with other interprofessional partners to recruit for champion and ambassador role
Timeline	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Measurements	Identify and develop one or more internal advisory committee partners and one interprofessional partner to serve in the champion/ambassador role		
	Track promotion of ATSU AHEC by champions and ambassadors.		

Objective 2

Objective 2	Improve evaluation processes in order to demonstrate the value of ATSU AHEC to ATSU
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ATSU AHEC has many different evaluation and assessment processes to meet program, grant, MAHEC, and ATSU needs. The data management processes are not effectively coordinated which results in an inconsistent ability to share the complete narrative of ATSU AHEC. By creating an effective and consistent process for ATSU AHEC to maintain its data and data analysis, a more complex, accurate, and interconnected narrative can be told about ATSU AHEC successes. This narrative will allow ATSU AHEC to better communicate how it shares the many ways it accomplishes its mission and works towards its vision.

Strategy 2.1	Assess audience interests and needs		
Tactics	2.1.1: Conduct information needs assessment of various ATSU partners	2.1.2: Assess alignment of grant information requirements with ATSU partner needs	2.1.3: Determine deliverable needs from ATSU partners (Truman, MOSDOH, etc.) and ability to demonstrate deliverables based on current data collected.
Timeline	Year One and Two	Year Three	Year Four
Measurements	Number of audience needs identified		
	Number of needs already satisfied with current data collection		
	Partners identified to gather information from		
	Partners responding to the needs assessment		
	Development of a matrix of partner needs, ATSU AHEC services, and service areas not met		

Strategy 2.2	Coordinate all ATSU AHEC data					
Tactics	2.2.1: Create a list of data needs and prioritize	2.2.2: Consensus and consolidation of appropriate data to align with APEX fields	2.2.3: Create a non-APEX data management process	2.2.4: Determine and gain access to ATSU data which may provide insight to ATSU AHEC as appropriate	2.2.5: Import all appropriate data into APEX	2.2.6: Work with other MAHEC partners on data collection to align questions and fields (Questions, format, etc.)
Timeline	Year One	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Year Five
Measurements	Have a tool to align non-APEX data					
	Knowledge of all data collected by ATSU AHEC					
	Ability to demonstrate data longitudinally					
	Matrix of data collected, collection process, data storage location					

Objective 3

Objective 3	Strengthen ATSU AHEC partnerships with individuals engaged in interprofessional education and practice
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The future of successful medical care is in interprofessional connections. ATSU AHEC is committed to providing interprofessional educational and practice opportunities. Current partnerships are often dependent on individual commitment of partners rather than a systematic process of developing and strengthening partnerships by ATSU AHEC. By specifically connecting with partner organizations who can contribute to and are committed to interprofessional medical care, ATSU AHEC can deepen the understanding of interprofessionalism of students and assist in building more interprofessional practice.

These partnerships will assist ATSU AHEC in moving towards its vision by having a more complex and complete program for participants and students.

Strategy 3.1	Identify pathways to develop partnerships		
Tactics	3.1.1: Develop relationship building plan based on ATSU AHEC rather than staff specific relationships	3.1.2: Develop consistent communication pathways	3.1.3: Develop standard operating procedure for contact with various partners
Timeline	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Measurements	Identify current active partners		
	Identify potential partners		
	Development of communication matrix for each partner regarding types of communications, topics discussed, etc.		

Strategy 3.2	Clarify the role ATSU AHEC should play at ATSU relevant to KCOM or MOSDOH		
Tactics	3.2.1: Identify ATSU AHEC interprofessional efforts	3.2.2: Identify KCOM, MOSDOH interprofessional efforts	3.2.3: Develop MOU about interprofessional efforts at ATSU
Timeline	Year Two	Year Three	Year Five
Measurements	How many faculty, staff and students are engaged in interprofessional efforts and how numbers change over time		
	Completion or development of MOU or coordination plan or interprofessional committees		
	Create a list of other interprofessional efforts across KCOM and MOSDOH		

Objective 4

Objective 4	Increase participation in ATSU AHEC programs through stabilization and expanded partnerships
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Instability in the ability to deliver certain programs either through timing, marketing, or logistical needs has negatively impacted ATSU AHEC's success in program delivery. By coordinating marketing and scheduling, ATSU AHEC will be better positioned to strengthen partnerships and increase participation in activities. This increase in stabilization and partnerships will provide more opportunities and stronger programs for participants. Stabilization and expanded partnerships increases the ability to serve the

health and wellness of underserved communities. ATSU can create and share additional narratives of individual success and self-sustaining success within ATSU and the community.

Strategy 4.1	Develop marketing materials which communicate inter-program menu of ATSU AHEC programs		
Tactics	4.1.1: Share marketing menu of ATSU AHEC with partners	4.1.2: Attempt to recruit participation in related programs	4.1.3: Utilize current partnerships to develop new partnerships
Timeline	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Measurements	Development of the standardized menu of products		
	Development of new partnerships and re-engaging inactive partners		

Strategy 4.2	Develop a revolving standardized schedule	
Tactics	4.2.1: Share with partners to have consistent understanding of program offering	4.2.2: Promote the schedule of marketing materials to develop new partnerships
Timeline	Year Two	Year Three
Measurements	Participation increase	
	Standardized schedule is developed and maintained	
	Identification of locations and partners who can assist in development of the standardized schedule	

Strategy 4.3	Advertising coordination (Aligns with strategy 1.2)		
Tactics	4.3.1: Develop an understanding of best advertising methodology for audiences	4.3.2: Brand all ATSU AHEC programs consistently	4.3.3: Coordinate ATSU AHEC advertising efforts
Timeline	Year One	Year One	Year Two
Measurements	Identifying low cost and free ways to advertise		
	Connect advertising with ATSU AHEC Champion/Ambassador		
	Develop a separate menu for clinicians, community based organizations, and for participants		

Objective 5

Objective 5	Increase knowledge and skillsets across ATSU AHEC staff
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ATSU AHEC staff are dedicated and hardworking individuals. In completing the SWOT analysis, it was identified there were limited skill sets regarding clinical certification and licensure and research abilities.

Additionally, there is little redundancy of skills if a staff member is unavailable. More cross training and general awareness of other’s activities will increase the ability to serve students and participants in a staff member’s absence. The greater ability to maintain operations when faced with obstacles will enhance ATSU AHEC’s ability to meet their mission and seek their vision.

Strategy 5.1	Cross train ATSU AHEC staff to develop capabilities in multiple roles				
Tactics	5.1.1: Construct a job shadowing program for ATSU AHEC staff to job shadow one another	5.1.2: Identify external certifications/training	5.1.3: Provide internal staff presentations on responsibilities, processes, and procedures	5.1.4: Conduct monthly calls/biannual meetings to maintain internal ATSU AHEC understanding of various programs	5.1.5: Conduct regular quick huddles/short meetings to maintain regular contact
Timeline	Year Two	Year Three	Continual	Continual	Continual
Measurements	How many shadowing opportunities are completed				
	Number of training presentations completed by ATSU AHEC for one another				
	Number of external trainings/certifications				
	Track monthly and biannual meetings				

Strategy 5.2	New staff with clinical certifications or research skills		
Tactics	5.2.1: Identify opportunities for new positions	5.2.2: Review current positions for opportunities for clinical or research components in the search process	5.2.3: Identify additional funding sources to create new positions or increase recruitment for replacement of current positions
Timeline	Year Two	Year three	Year Three
Measurements	New hires with clinical or research skills		
	Identify funding sources		
	Review of job descriptions when there is an opening for opportunities to include clinical or research skills		

Timeline

Within each year, groups of similarly associated tactics have been grouped together. Grouping titles are not related year to year. For example group A in year one likely has nothing to do with group A in year two.

Year One

1.1.1: Reach out to ATSU partners offering presentations	1.1.2: Develop a standard presentation template	3.1.1: Develop relationship building plan based on ATSU AHEC rather than staff specific relationships	1.2.1: Partner with Communications & Marketing to develop branding	4.3.2: Brand all ATSU AHEC programs consistently
Group A			Group B	

1.4.1: Create a set of expectations for ambassadors or champions	2.1.1: Conduct information needs assessment of various ATSU partners	4.3.1: Develop an understanding of best advertising methodology for audiences	2.2.1: Create a list of data needs and prioritize	2.2.2: Consensus and consolidation of appropriate data to align with APEX fields
Group C	Group D		Group E	

Year Two

1.2.2: Identify virtual and hard copy material to develop	4.1.1: Share marketing menu of ATSU AHEC with partners	4.2.1: Share with partners to have consistent understanding of program offering	4.3.3: Coordinate ATSU AHEC advertising efforts	1.3.1: Encourage ATSU AHEC staff to serve on ATSU committees in order to be more present within the university	1.4.2: Connect with internal advisory committee members on champion and ambassador role
Group A			Group B	Group C	

2.1.1: Conduct information needs assessment of various ATSU partners	3.1.2: Develop consistent communication pathways	2.2.3: Create a non-APEX data management process	3.2.1: Identify ATSU AHEC interprofessional efforts	5.1.1: Construct a job shadowing program for ATSU AHEC staff to job shadow one another	5.2.1: Identify opportunities for new positions
Group D		Group E	Group F	Group G	

Year Three

1.3.2: Engage with student organizations (serve as an advisor, connect shared interests, etc.)	1.4.3: Connect with other interprofessional partners to recruit for champion and ambassador role	2.1.2: Assess alignment of grant information requirements with ATSU partner needs	2.2.4: Determine and gain access to ATSU data which may provide insight to ATSU AHEC as appropriate	3.1.3: Develop standard operating procedure for contact with various partners
Group A	Group B	Group C		Group D

3.2.2: Identify KCOM, MOSDOH interprofessional efforts	4.1.2: Attempt to recruit participation in related programs	4.2.2: Promote the schedule of marketing materials to develop new partnerships	5.1.2: Identify external certifications / training	5.2.2: Review current positions for opportunities for clinical or research components in the search process	5.2.3: Identify additional funding sources to create new positions or increase recruitment of replacement for current positions
Group E	Group F		Group G		

Year Four

2.1.3: Determine deliverable needs from ATSU partners (Truman, MOSDOH, etc.) and ability to demonstrate deliverables based on current data collected.	2.2.5: Import all appropriate data into APEX	4.1.3: Utilize current partnerships to develop new partnerships
Group A	Group B	Group C

Year Five

2.2.6: Work with other MAHEC partners on data collection to align questions and fields (Questions, format, etc.)	3.2.3: Develop MOU about interprofessional efforts at ATSU
Group A	Group B

Continual

1.1.3: Tailor presentation to meet ATSU partner needs	1.2.3: Create consistent messaging across programs and materials	5.1.3: Provide internal staff presentations on responsibilities, processes, and procedures	5.1.4: Conduct monthly calls/biannual meetings to maintain internal ATSU AHEC understanding of various programs	5.1.5: Conduct regular quick huddles/short meetings to maintain regular contact
Group A	Group B	Group C		