

Albany biopharma training center hires new executive director

[Shayla Colon](#)

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Michelle Lewis, executive director of the Stack Family Center for Biopharmaceutical Education and Training (CBET) on Jan. 10, 2022, at NY CREATES in Albany, N.Y. The center opened in September and is aimed at fostering and developing the pharma workforce.



ALBANY – The Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (ACPHS) has appointed a new executive director to its Stack Family Center for Biopharmaceutical Education and Training (CBET) following its former titleholder's retirement.

The biopharma training center [opened in Sept. 2021 at the Albany Nanotech Complex](#) and has selected Michelle Lewis to continue overseeing the facility's mission. Kamal Rashid was the center's previous executive director.

ACPHS President Gregory Dewey compared it to a bookend. Rashid, who was older and experienced, started the center and now “young blood” is coming in with plenty of energy and ideas, he noted.

Lewis comes to the center from the University of Georgia, where she spent the last seven years as an assistant director at the school’s bioexpression and fermentation facility. There, Lewis guided business development, fee for service plans, managed staff scientists and fostered training opportunities for employees and students, a press release said.

Her previous experience also includes a variety of roles at Vanderbilt University, the Diversa Corporation and Johnson and Johnson. Lewis said she’s “thrilled” to have landed at CBET and looks forward to leading the facility through its next step.

Her goal is to develop the center’s training and teaching services into a national program with the potential to later become a fee-for-service facility that addresses the “huge gap” in biopharmaceutical manufacturing.

As a fee-for-service facility, CBET would partner with companies to help them complete projects in exchange for a fee.

“I hope to bring strengths in terms of my academic and professional relationships to the facility, capitalize on my vision for bringing fee for service to CBET, which would allow us to generate more revenue for the facility and also kind of make bridges or inroads to the pharmaceutical industry and provide that training for them,” Lewis said.

“That’s a vision for the future. Right now, our emphasis is going to be continuing to grow our educational programs,” she added. Dewey said CBET is “fortunate” to have Lewis leading its next phase. He likened her dual experience in academia and industry to that of the mythological Greek centaur, and a “unique” and “great” fit for the job.

The industry, according to Dewey, is “exploding” but is limited by its lack of talent, which is why CBET is geared toward entering the space and developing that workforce.

CBET hired a headhunter to conduct its national search and considered about 20 candidates before selecting Lewis.

“Industry operates differently than academia,” Dewey said. “We want to train (the) industrial workforce, so we need somebody that knows the industry.”