

# Student Opinions About the Value of Required Mental Health First Aid Training

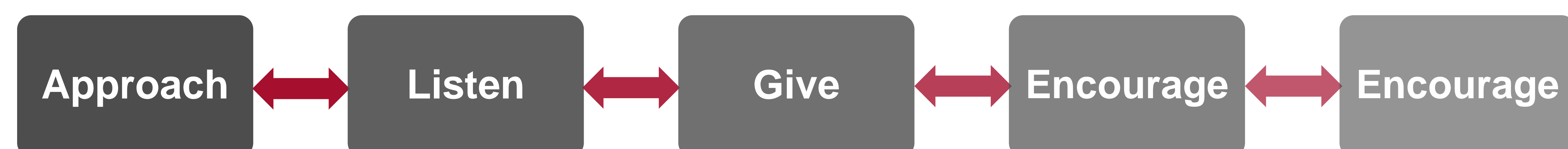
Kathryn MacCamy, Pharm.D., Kimberly McKeirnan, Pharm.D., Jennifer Robinson, Pharm.D., Megan Willson, Pharm.D.  
Washington State University College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Spokane, WA, USA



## Introduction:

- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches evidence-based methods to identify and assist an individual experiencing a mental health problem or crisis.
- MHFA was added as a requirement in a Doctor of Pharmacy didactic curriculum.

Figure 1. ALGEE action plan



## Project Objective:

- Describe student pharmacist reflections on implementation of MHFA training in the didactic curriculum at a college of pharmacy.

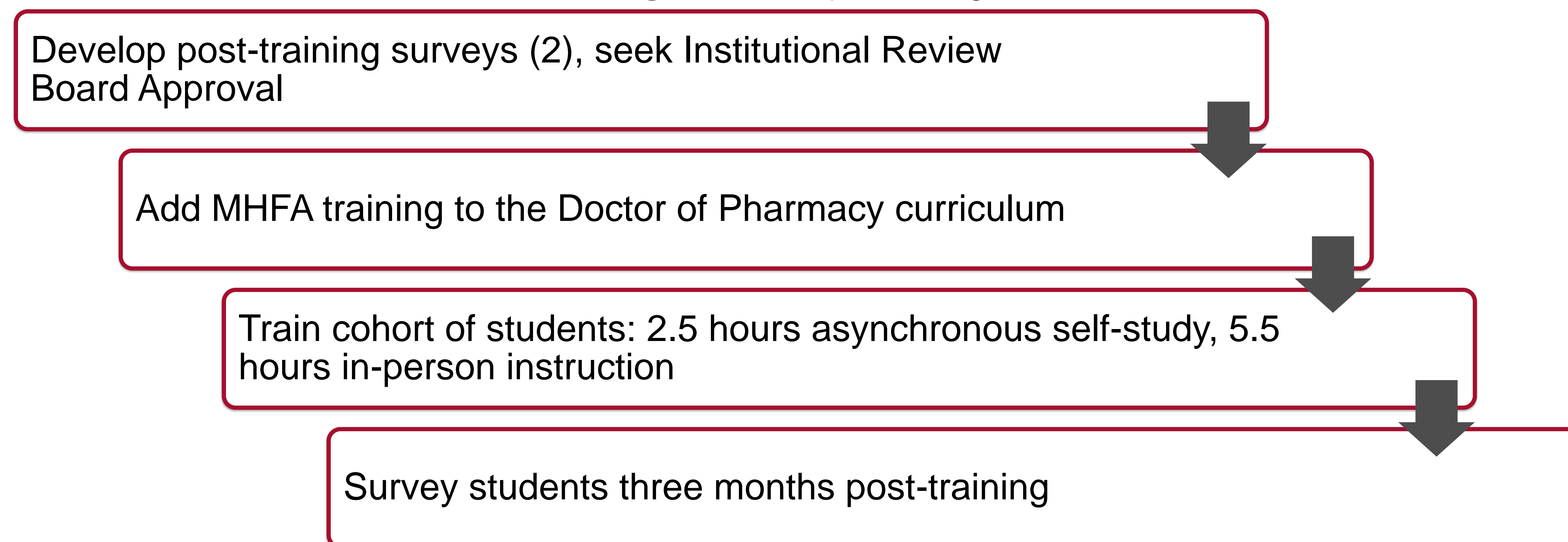
## MHFA Objectives:

- Recognize the potential risk factors and warning signs for mental health problems, including depression, anxiety/trauma, psychosis and psychotic disorders, substance use disorders, and self-injury.
- Use 5-step action plan to aid a person in crisis to connect with appropriate professional help.
- Interpret the prevalence of various mental health disorders in the U.S. and the need for reduced negative attitudes in their communities.
- Apply knowledge of the appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help resources available to help someone with a mental health problem treat and manage the problem and achieve recovery.
- Assess personal views and feelings about mental health problems and disorders.

## Methods:

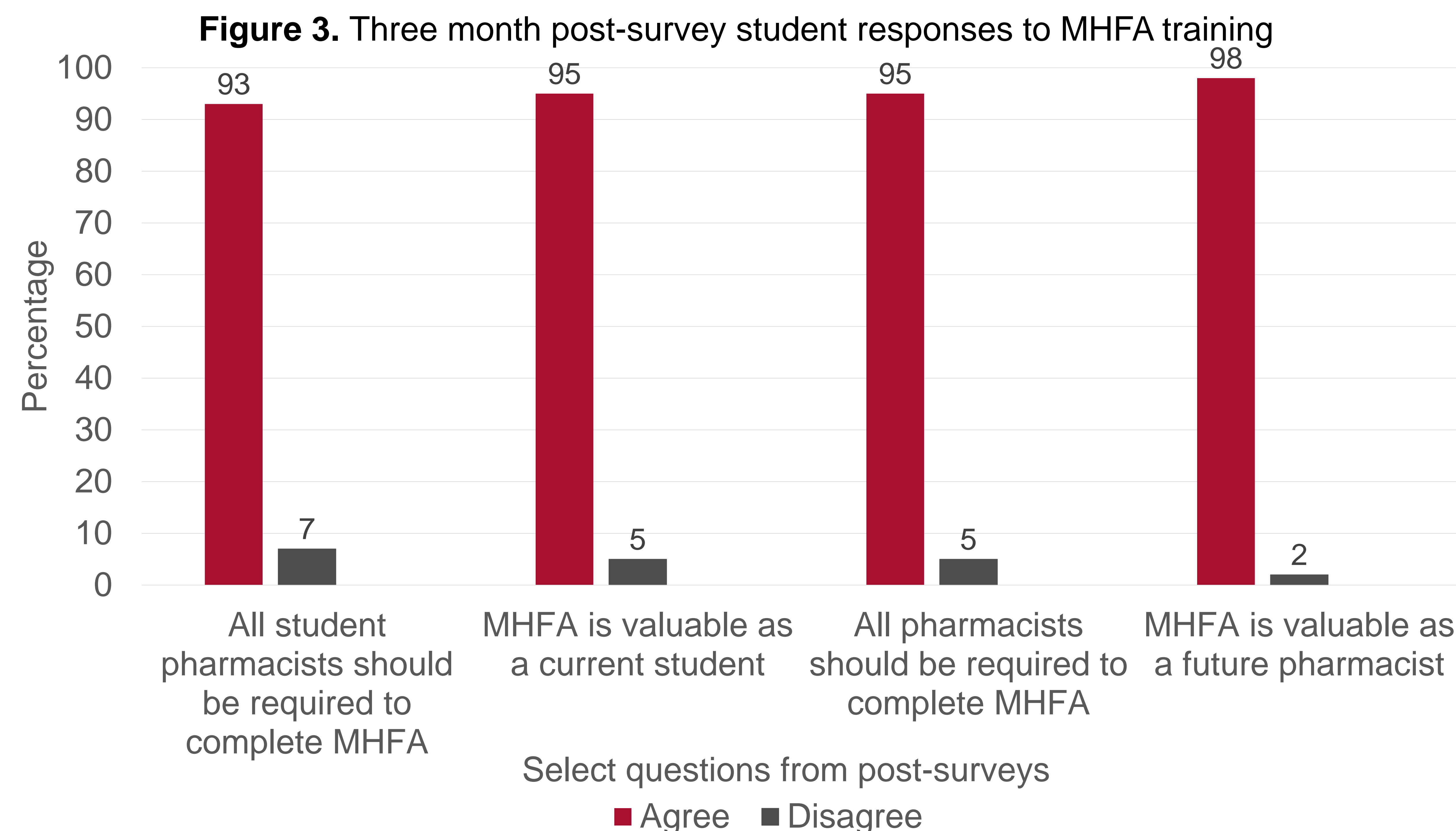
- Three months post-training, faculty surveyed MHFA trained students to gather perceptions on the value of training.
- Survey questions included: Items from the Opening Minds to Stigma Scale for Healthcare Providers (OMS-HC); Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Gatekeeper Training for Suicide Prevention; Questions developed by the authors to assess impact of MHFA training on participant reported stigma, confidence and willingness to provide care to an individual potentially experiencing a mental issue.

Figure 2. Project design



## Results:

- 237 students trained in MHFA
- 84% post-training survey response rate
- 42% reached out to someone they knew to talk about mental health resources
- 28% seeking help for their own mental health



## Student Quotes:

- “The training has made me more comfortable dealing with a mental health crisis.”
- “This training was beneficial to my own future practice as a pharmacist, friend, and family member.”
- “This was a great experience. I would recommend making this an orientation course for first years.”
- “The training was very helpful and very valuable for big signs to check for in depressed patients and friends.”
- “The MHFA training went well. I started to care more about myself and for my next step, I will start taking care of someone else.”
- “The training helped practice having necessary but hard conversations with people who need them.”
- “I think it is very important to stress mental health awareness.”

## Conclusions:

- MHFA was successfully implemented into the curriculum in a Doctor of Pharmacy program.
- Most student pharmacists found the training valuable and agreed it should be required for both future and practicing pharmacists.
- Similar programs could be implemented at other pharmacy programs to offer students training on caring for the mental health of themselves, patients, and their community.