Connecting students to careers

Professionals to communities

And communities to better health.

www.NationalAHEC.org
Success of the AHEC Network

The AHEC (Area Health Education Centers) program was developed by Congress in 1971 to recruit, train and retain a health professions workforce committed to underserved populations. The AHEC program helps bring the resources of academic medicine to address local community health needs. The strength of the AHEC Network is its ability to creatively adapt national initiatives to help address local and regional healthcare issues.

Today, 56 AHEC programs with 235 community-based centers operate in almost every state and the District of Columbia. Approximately 120 medical schools and 600 nursing and allied health schools work collaboratively with AHECs to improve health for underserved and under-represented populations.

A Vital Continuing Role for AHECs

Imbalances in our healthcare system result in marked inequities in access to and quality of healthcare services. This perpetuates disparities in health status and the under-representation of minority and disadvantaged individuals in the healthcare workforce. AHEC programs play a key role in correcting these inequities and strengthening the nation’s health care safety net. Through community-based interdisciplinary training programs, AHECs identify, motivate, recruit, train, and retain a health care workforce committed to underserved populations.

Key AHEC Initiatives & Outcomes

Recruit under-represented minority and disadvantaged students into health professions through a broad range of programs.
Impact—Minority and disadvantaged students are significantly under-represented in health professions and are more likely to practice in underserved communities.

Develop and support community-based interdisciplinary training of health professions students in underserved areas.
Impact—Students who are exposed to underserved communities are more likely to return to these communities to practice.

Facilitate and support practitioners, facilities and community-based organizations in effectively addressing critical local health issues.
Impact—AHECs are flexible and efficient mechanisms for addressing a wide and evolving variety of healthcare issues on the local level.

Provide continuing education and other services to improve the quality of community-based care.
Impact—AHEC’s provide continuing medical education on a wide variety of topics, to enhance the ability of physicians and other healthcare providers to provide high quality patient care.

A National Pipeline For Community-Based Health Professions Education

The impact of AHECs is reflected in their performance. Data below is for the 2009 program year.

CONNECTING STUDENTS TO CAREERS

- Over 456,000 students introduced to health career opportunities
- Over 32,000 students participated in AHEC health programs of 20+ hours, providing them with health career exposure, professional mentorship, and academic enhancement to prepare them for health professions training programs

CONNECTING PROFESSIONALS TO COMMUNITIES

- Over 47,000 health professions students received training at 17,388 community-based sites
- Over 10,600 of the community-based training sites were located in underserved areas, including over 3,976 in designated Health Professions Shortage Areas (HPSAs) and almost 2,000 at Community Health Centers
- Over 69% of the health professions students were physicians (43%) or nurses (20%)

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO BETTER HEALTH

- Over 438,000 health professionals received training through AHEC continuing education programs
- Almost half of the continuing education program participants were physicians (27%) or nurses (20%)
- Awarded 1.17 million contact hours of continuing education programs

Sources: FY 2009 HRSA Bureau of Health Professions Report Tables and NAO Committee on Research and Evaluation (CORE) Critical Data Tables from Reporting AHEC Programs.
The AHEC Mission

To enhance access to quality healthcare, particularly primary and preventative care, by improving the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals through community/academic educational partnerships.

“AHECs provide a unique and valuable infrastructure for “rolling out” a wide range of federal and state workforce development, professional education and health promotion initiatives. These programs have established relationships in local communities built on trust and demonstrated performance. State and federal agencies find they can reach communities faster and with fewer bureaucratic hassles if they use AHEC as a platform.”

- Findings reported in Executive Summary, An Evaluative Summary of the AHEC Program by the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002

“Area Health Education Centers improve access to quality health care, and are critical to expanding the pipeline of health professionals. What is so special about AHECs is that they do this through educational partnerships with the community and academia.”

- Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-NE

“AHECs do it all … AHECs are essential: intricately woven into the fabrics of their regions, benefiting their communities in countless ways.”

- Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-MD

“Without AHEC, I would not have experienced life as a clinician in those communities. AHEC plays a vital role in exposing students to underserved areas. Because of my rotations arranged by AHEC, I was given the opportunity to become a more well-rounded clinician.”

- Natalie Ough, Physician Assistant

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NAO is the national organization that supports and advances the AHEC network in improving the health of individuals and communities by transforming health care through education.