



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Arizona AHEC
Area Health Education Centers

Arizona AHEC Scholars Program: Developing and Evaluating a High Quality AHEC Scholars Program

Participate in today's interactive session by:

1. Open your web browser on your cellphone or laptop
2. Visit [Pollev.com/mv513](https://pollev.com/mv513) or scan this QR code
3. Enter your name





Presenters

Jennifer Zúñiga, Associate Director

Marni Valenzuela, Program Manager

Nicole Paredes, Program Manager

Sonia Cota-Robles, Evaluation Specialist





Agenda

- AzAHEC Overview
- ASP Partnerships
- ASP Participation Highlights
- ASP Program Framework
- ASP Program Elements
- Successful Partnering
- Evaluation Strategies
- Program Improvement



Arizona AHEC Overview

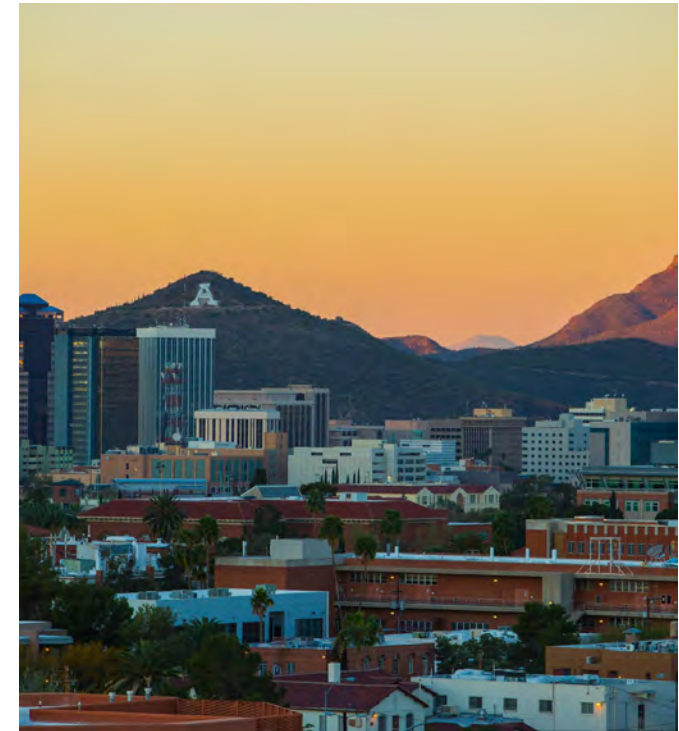
Mission: *Enhance access to quality healthcare through academic-community educational partnerships.*

Program Office at University of Arizona Health Sciences Center.

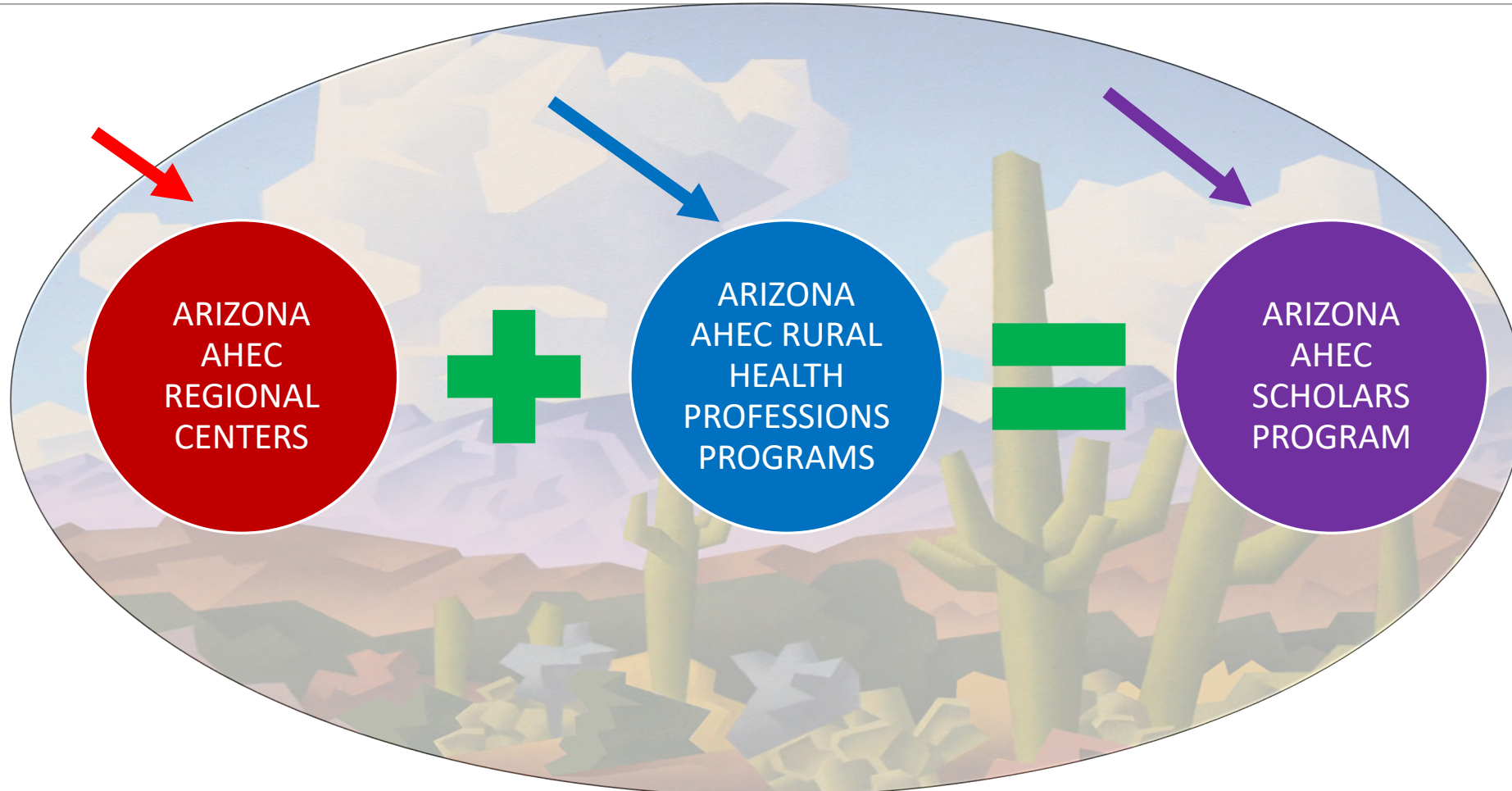
Five federally-funded Regional Centers create and coordinate programs within service regions.

State of Arizona Lottery funds support these centers and a sixth regional center.

Academic collaborators are the Rural Health Professions Programs (RHPPs).



AzAHEC Scholars Program: Cornerstone of an Academic/Community Partnership





ARIZONA
AHEC
REGIONAL
CENTERS

Arizona AHEC's Community Partners

Federally-Funded Regional Centers:

Central Arizona AHEC (CAAHEC),

Center for Excellence in Rural Education (CERE-AHEC),

Colorado Plateau Center for Health Professions (CPCHP),

Southern Arizona AHEC (SAAHEC),

Western Arizona AHEC (WAHEC).

Required Scholar participation includes 75 Scholars per cohort at five federally funded centers

American Indian Health AHEC focuses on American Indian health care and workforce.

Began in 2022 and currently funded with State of Arizona Lottery funds only

Anticipate federal funding beginning in September 2024.



ARIZONA
AHEC
REGIONAL
CENTERS

AZAHEC Regional Centers

470 Miles
(Drive from Boston to
Washington DC=441 Miles)



Arizona AHEC Regions and Tribal Nations in Arizona

- Tribal Nations
- Arizona Area Health Education Center Program (AzaHEC) Tucson
- American Indian Health Area Health Education Center (AIH-AHEC)
- Southern Arizona Area Health Education Center (SAAHEC)
- Central Arizona Area Health Education Center (CAAHEC)
- Center for Excellence in Rural Education (CERE)
- Colorado Plateau Center for Health Professions (CPCHP)
- Western Arizona Area Health Education Center (WAAHEC)



375 Miles
(Drive From Baltimore to Cleveland = 373 miles)



Arizona AHEC's Community Partners

Regional Centers have:

1. Graduate-level students from at least two different disciplines--medicine, nurse practitioner, pharmacy, physical therapy, physician assistant, and public health.
2. Faculty Mentors from a health profession discipline who guide one group of interprofessional Scholars for two years
 - a. can separately be a preceptor to students within own discipline
3. Region-specific community immersions, monthly meetings, group projects
4. Payment of Scholar stipends



RURAL HEALTH
PROFESSIONS
PROGRAMS

Arizona AHEC's Academic Partners

Rural Health Professions Programs (RHPP) include graduate-level health profession students at three Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) Public Universities:

Arizona State University (ASU)

Nurse Practitioner Students

University of Arizona (UArizona)

Medical Students, College of Medicine – Tucson

Medical Students, College of Medicine – Phoenix

Nurse Practitioner Students

Pharmacy Students

Public Health Students

Northern Arizona University (NAU)

Nurse Practitioner Students

Physician Assistant Students

Physical Therapy Students

Arizona AHEC's Academic Partners

Rural Health Professions Programs (RHPPs):

1. receive AzaAHEC support RHPP rotations; about 200,000 CBET hours annually.
2. recruit RHPP students to additionally apply to become AHEC Scholars

AzaAHEC Program Office:

1. Assigns accepted Scholars from different RHPPs to one Regional Center.

AzAHEC Scholars Highlights

In Academic Year 2022-23, 160 AzAHEC Scholars included:

1. 84 Scholars from the 2021-23 Cohort--completed in May 2023,
2. 76 continuing Scholars in 2022-24 expected to complete in May 2024.

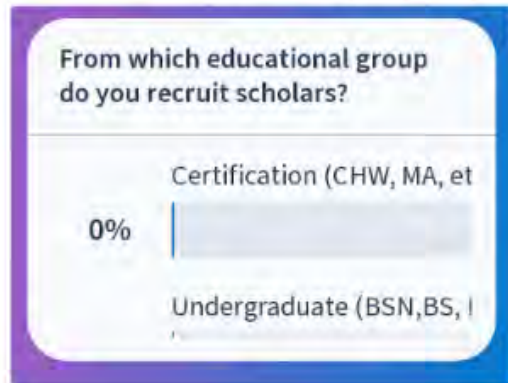
95% retention rate for these two Cohorts.

Approximately 25% of the 600 RHPP students are AHEC Scholars.

The 2023-25 cohort is now being recruited.

Poll Question

From which educational group do you recruit scholars?



Response options	Count	Percentage
Certification (CHW, MA, etc...)	32	20%
Undergraduate (BSN,BS, BA)	44	28%
Master (MPH, NP, etc...)	42	27%
Doctoral (MD, DNP, PharmD, DrPH, etc...)	40	25%



Engagement

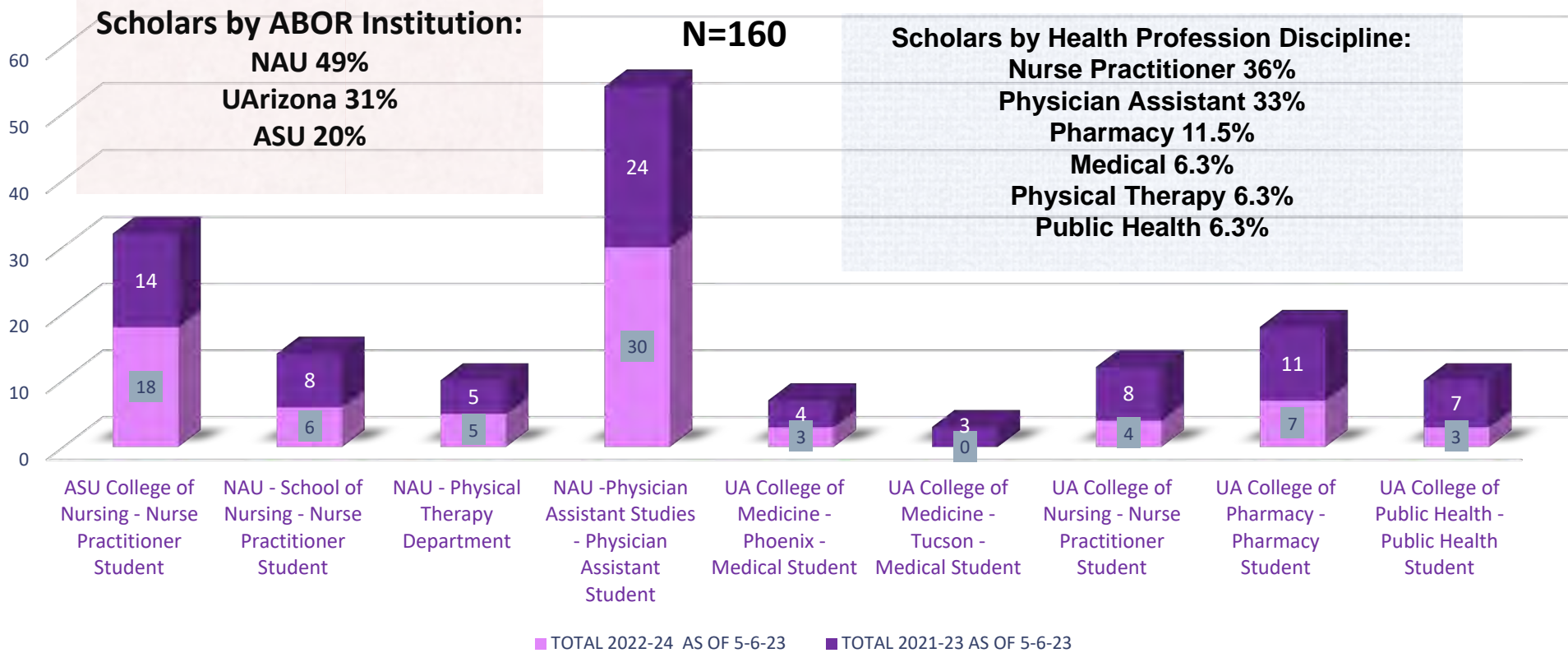
158

Responses



AzAHEC Scholars by Health Profession Discipline

2022-24 AND 2021-23 ARIZONA AHEC SCHOLARS

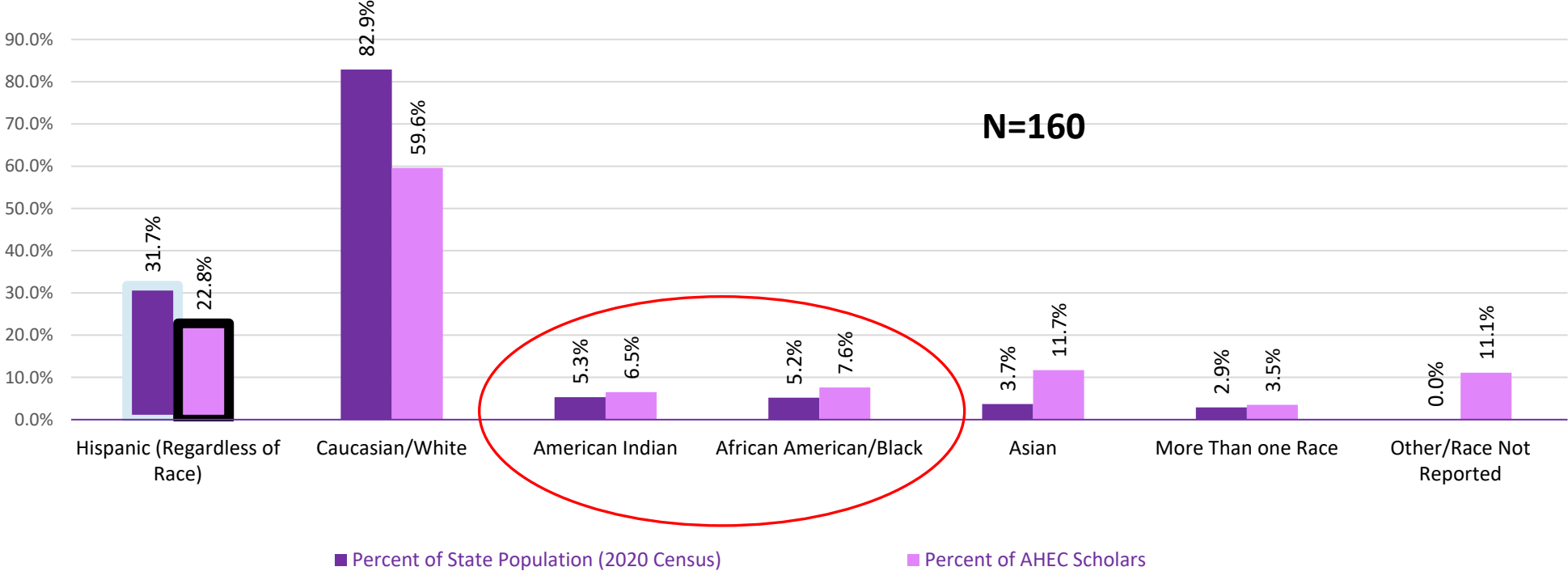




AzAHEC Scholars by Diversity



2022-24 AND 2021-23 ARIZONA AHEC SCHOLARS



AHEC Scholars Program Framework



Program is developed collaboratively and updated annually with input from partners.

Regional Centers and RHPPs submit annual proposals inclusive of ASP costs and budget

Funded programs required to report on planned deliverables.



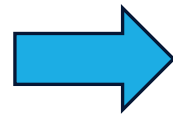
AHEC Scholars Program Elements

- AHEC Scholar Recruitment and Selection
- Faculty Mentors
- Scholar Orientation
- Program Communication Platform
- Monthly Seminars
- Fall and Spring Immersions
- Team Projects
- AHEC Scholars Manual
- Managing Program Withdrawals
- Regular Partner Meetings

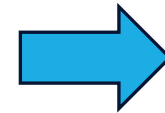
AHEC Scholar Recruitment and Selection

- Students from nine RHPP programs at the state universities are invited to participate in the 2-year program...
 - to enhance their knowledge of rural and medically underserved communities
 - to develop skills in collaborating across health disciplines

Each academic year, each RHPP program director recruits students from their program to apply



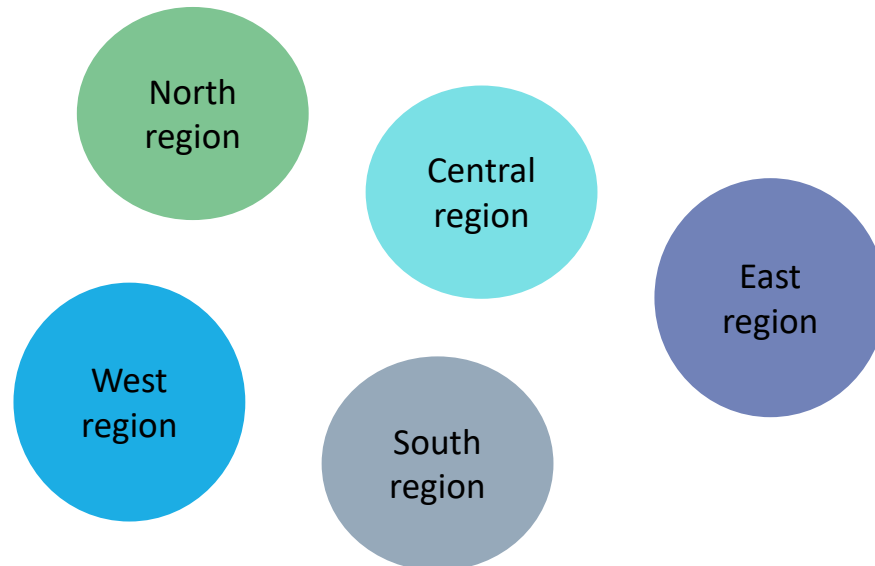
Each RHPP program director selects AHEC Scholars from their applicants



The AzAHEC Program Office assigns selected AHEC Scholars to one of 5 teams:

- each associated with a region and Regional Center
- each with representation by two or more disciplines

Scholars can request a preferred region and best efforts are made to accommodate their request.



Each Scholar is eligible for stipends paid across the 2 years.

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: Elements of the Standard Application

Typical data is collected

- Basic contact information (e.g., first and last name, email address, phone)
- Individual Demographics (e.g., race, ethnicity, background, veteran status)
- Health Program Level Information (e.g., type of health discipline, anticipated graduation date)

LEARNING:

All of our academic partners now use one common strategy

Essay questions ask:

- Statement of interest to practice in rural or underserved community
- Benefit to the applicant of being of an AHEC Scholar
- Statement of special consideration in becoming an AHEC Scholar

Details about the AHEC Scholars program are provided in the application

- Number of hours
- Disciplines eligible
- Stipend details
- Dates of activities

LEARNING:

Earlier development and availability of the annual schedule of activities helps applying Scholars be available for activities.

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: Faculty Mentors

The Faculty Mentor provides direct mentoring support to a team of AHEC Scholars at their assigned Regional Center site.

Faculty Mentors.....

- must have a master's degree or above in a health discipline
- must be academically prepared to teach health profession students
- must have a proven record of health profession work in rural and/or urban underserved areas.

Faculty Mentors may only provide mentoring support to one Scholar team per year.

Faculty Mentors are financially compensated for their time.

Each regional center selects the Faculty Mentors for their region.

LEARNING:

In early delivery, Faculty Mentors were selected by the academic partner RHPPs. Regional Centers are in a better position to find mentors familiar with the region.

LEARNING:

A Faculty Mentor training presentation was needed to make sure new Faculty Mentors understood all the program elements.

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: Scholar Orientation

Scholars are provided a 3-hour online Orientation annually at the beginning of each academic year that covers:

- Arizona AHEC (AzaAHEC)
- Partners in the AHEC Scholars Program (Centers and RHPPs)
- Select prior AHEC Scholars share their experience as Scholars
- Faculty mentor introductions
- Scholar expectations and activities*
- Schedule of required activities
- Provision of stipends
- Demonstration of D2L (“Desire 2 Learn” - the program communication platform)*
- Evaluation elements and use for program improvement*
- Keynote speaker on a core topic (e.g., Social Determinants of Health)



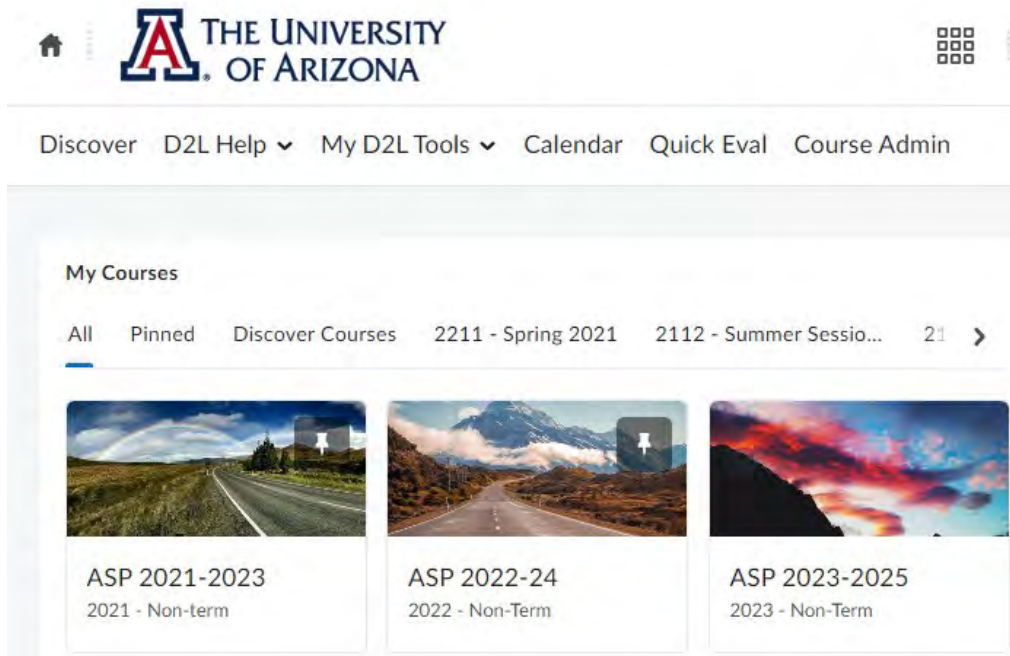
Much of this information is also provided in a manual available online

* Covered later in this presentation

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: Program Communication Platform

AzAHEC uses a communication platform that is accessible by all AHEC Scholar partners and students

AzAHEC uses a university-based learning management system called Desire 2 Learn (“D2L”)



Information accessible on the Communication Platform:

- AHEC Scholar Program Manual
- Monthly Seminar materials
- Designated group Zoom links
- Example of projects from prior AHEC Scholar cohorts
- Attendance at AHEC Scholar activities
- Important announcements and deadlines

LEARNING:

AHEC Scholars benefit from an easily-accessible, common communication strategy.

LEARNING:

A tutorial helps make sure Scholars and other partners can use D2L.

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: Monthly seminars (didactics)

- Held once a month, on the same day and time and are virtual for all year 1 and year 2 teams.
- Each Faculty Mentor selects one or more core topic(s) at the beginning of the academic year and creates a presentation or recruits an outside speaker.
- Seminar activities:
 - Live or pre-recorded presentation
 - For a live presentation, all teams are on the same Zoom link
 - Discussion of presentation
 - On a Zoom link with only their team and Faculty Mentor



LEARNING:
The AzaHEC Program Office now reviews and approves the topics and presentation selected by the Faculty Mentors.

LEARNING:
Taking attendance is helpful to make sure Scholars are remaining engaged.

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: Fall and Spring Community Immersions

The purpose of a Community Immersion is to familiarize the AHEC Scholar team with a rural or MUC community in their assigned region.

Each AHEC Scholar team attends a two-day, in person Community Immersion experience in the Fall and Spring semester.

Each Community Immersion experience is organized by the Regional Center that the team is associated with, in collaboration with the Faculty Mentor.

Activities at each Community Immersion:

- are designed with learning activities to “immerse” the AHEC Scholar team in the community
- give the interprofessional Scholar team an opportunity to get to know each other

Scholars can request a region, but it may require several hours of travel time to get to their site for the in-person Immersions.



LEARNING:
Immersion were also incorporated into Year 2.

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: Samples of Community Immersions Activities

A “windshield survey” - a short, observation-based community assessment conducted by walking through or driving through a community.



A drive through the community

A walking scavenger hunt through the community

Community Stakeholder Speakers Panel

Presentations by key informant community members

Team-building activities

Tour of community resources (hospital, homeless shelter, etc.)

Training in Core Topics

Participation in a Community Health Event

Poll Question: What other types of activities do you offer scholars to engage them in the community?

Responses Received:

- Project presentations
- high school outreach
- Health fair
- Immersion
- Shadowing
- Community walks
- Book club
- Souo
- HOWE Mobile Clinic
- Windshield
- Experiential
- Meetings
- Twinings
- Shadowing
- Health fairs
- Internships
- Volunteer
- Site visits to local healthcare facilities
- case competition
- Health clinic
- Community project
- Health fairs
- Shadowing
- Summer camp
- Cultural Immersions
- Volunteer Shifts at Local FQHCs
- Movie club
- Health screens
- Retreat
- Rural rotations
- Simulations
- Job shadowing
- Recovery
- Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid
- School visits
- Clinics
- Clinical IPE Rotations
- Community partner boot camp
- Community health impact project
- IPE simulation
- Vaccination clinics
- Rural health immersions
- Health trainings
- Health presentations
- Rural Health Immersion
- Park community outreach
- Telehealth "swag bags" for an underserved community.
- Drives
- Competency
- Movie club
- Domestic violence shelter
- Community kitchens
- Mental health and first aid
- Health fairs and blood pressure screenings
- Meetings and conferences

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: Team Projects

Supported by their Faculty Mentor, each AHEC Scholar team develops a project based on a health-related issue in their select rural or medically-underserved community

First year Scholars collect information on their community and:

- write a Community Assessment report
- develop a poster

Second year Scholars expand their 1st year project and:

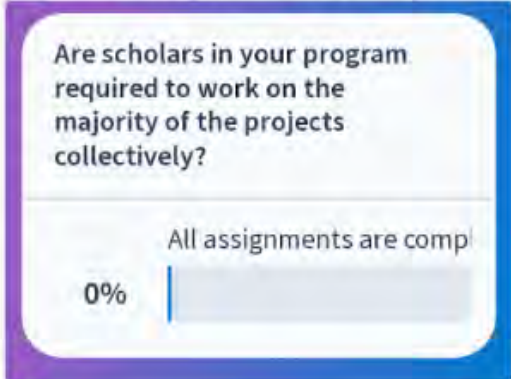
- write a Scholarly Report about a health related problem in their community using quality improvement process
- develop a Podium Presentation



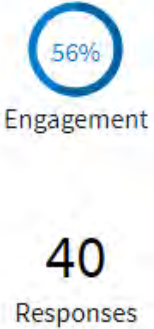
Scholar teams present their Posters and Podium Presentations at an Annual Interprofessional Rural Health Professions Program Conference held each Spring

Poll Question

Are scholars in your program required to work on the majority of the projects collectively?

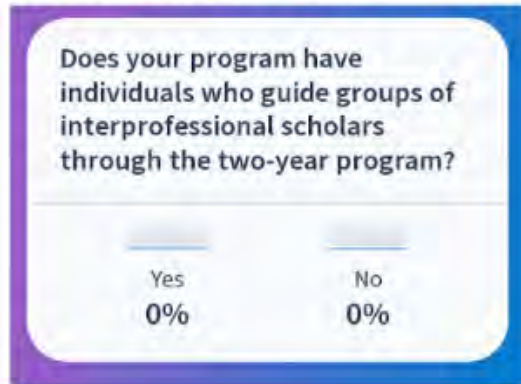


Response options	Count	Percentage
All assignments are completed as a team	7	18%
All assignments are done individually	13	33%
Both	18	45%
Individual assignments are only available as an alternative option	2	5%



Poll Question

Does your program have individuals who guide groups of interprofessional scholars through the two-year program?



Response options

Yes

No

Count

16

17

Percentage

48%

52%



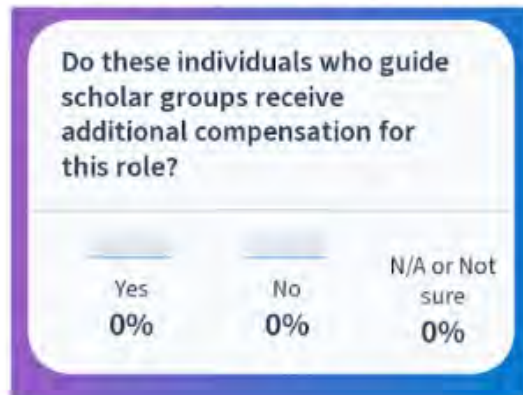
Engagement

33

Responses

Poll Question

Do these individuals who guide scholar groups receive additional compensation for this role?



Response options	Count	Percentage
Yes	6	16%
No	18	47%
N/A or Not sure	14	37%

54%
Engagement

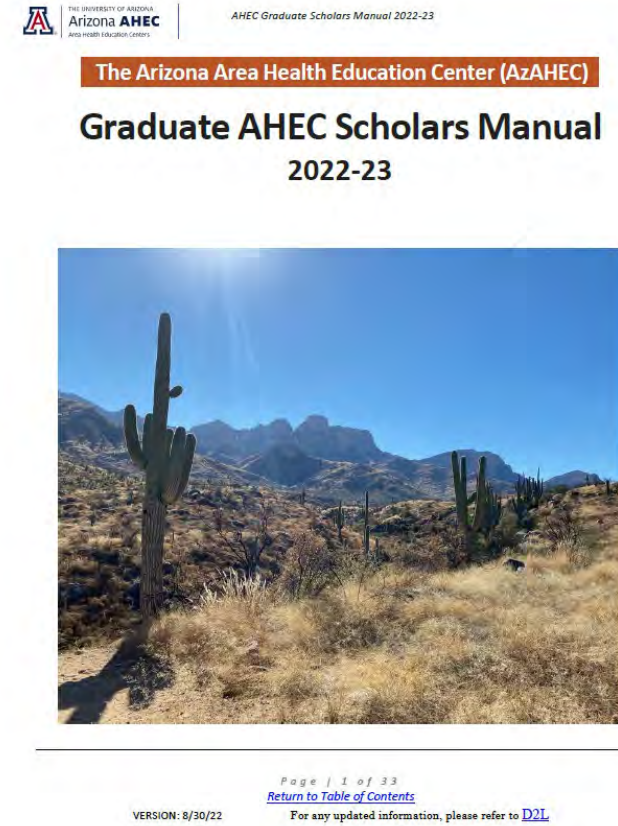
38
Responses

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: AHEC Scholars Manual

The AzAHEC Program Office produces a manual that covers all elements of the AHEC Scholars Program.

Key components:

- Scholar recruiting, application, and acceptance practices
- Faculty mentor requirements, recruiting, roles and responsibilities
- Scholar duties, responsibilities, and required activities in each program year
- Contact information for key partners (regional centers, faculty mentors, RHPPs)
- Calendar of events, deadlines and related hours
- Program status change/Withdrawal form
- Scholar support processes for stipends and travel reimbursement
- Other resources
 - Core topics
 - Example of windshield survey
 - Guidelines on Scholar required activities (posters, presentations, papers, etc.)



The AHEC Scholars Manual is reviewed and updated annually.

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: Managing Program Withdrawals

Although efforts are made to retain all Scholars for the full two years, some Scholars are unable to complete the program.

A *Program Change Form* is used when a student wants to withdraw or take a leave of absence (LOA) from the AHEC Scholars Program

1. Scholar notifies their RHPP Director of their intention to withdraw or temporarily leave the program.
2. The RHPP Director meets with the Scholar and has the Scholar fill out and sign the Program Change Form if they are sure they want to withdraw.
3. The RHPP Director signs the Program Change Form and sends it to the AzaAHEC Program Office.
4. The AzaAHEC Program Office notifies the Faculty Mentor and Center Director and obtains their signatures.

The process is designed to keep all partners informed.

The Program Change Form is also used for a Scholar returning from an approved LOA.

LEARNING: Important to track lagging engagement/withdrawals

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Arizona AHEC
Area Health Education Centers

AHEC Scholar Program Change

Date: _____

Effective Date: _____

The below-named AHEC Scholar student has requested:

Leave of Absence from the AHEC Scholars Program Reason for request: _____

Withdrawal from AHEC Scholars Program

Leave of absence from university

Total withdrawal from university

Return from leave of absence

Student Name: _____ Student Signature: _____

Institution/College: _____

AHEC Center: AIH-AHEC CAAHEC CERE-AHEC
 CPCHP SAAHEC WAHEC

AHEC Scholar Faculty Mentor for this student: _____

RHPP Director for this student: _____

AHEC Program Office signature: _____

RHPP Director signature: _____

Faculty Mentor signature: _____

AHEC Center Director signature: _____

AHEC Scholars Program Elements: Regular Partner Meetings

The AzaHEC Office and partners meet regularly to:

- Manage program planning and activities
 - Identify gaps and needed program adjustments
 - Discuss successes and challenges
 - Announce changes and required action
- AzaHEC Program Office and Regional Centers meet monthly.
 - AzaHEC Program Office, Regional Centers, and RHHPs meet monthly.
 - AzaHEC Program Office Regional Centers and Faculty Mentors meet quarterly.



Meetings include directors; other partner staff are welcome.

LEARNING:

Regular meetings with Faculty Mentors was added to:

- Gather feedback
- Ensure they have the information needed to oversee program elements
- Share ideas with each other.

Strategies for Successful Partnering!



Solicit active buy-in from partners by inviting and implementing their ideas for program development and improvement



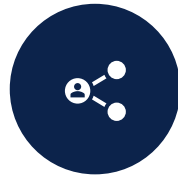
Engage partners in key program elements (e.g., faculty mentor selection, manual review, scheduling events)



Plan and calendar meetings and events with plenty of time to participate



Regular communication (e.g., regular meetings)



Keep all partners informed (e.g., Program Change Form, evaluation results)



Provide resources that support partnering (contracts, timelines, manual, orientation for faculty mentors)



Thank your partners and let them know their participation is key for the success of the program (e.g., student experience and exposure to rural and underserved communities).



Evaluating Arizona's AHEC Scholars Program

Aims of our AHEC Scholars evaluation:

- Identify any needed program changes/improvements to improve satisfaction and retention
- Learn about the impact of AHEC Scholars
- Prepare for required reporting to HRSA

Evaluation of the AHEC Scholars Program: Data collection tools and strategies

- Satisfaction Surveys
- Program End Survey
- One-year Post Graduation Survey
- Interview Protocol for Non-completers

Evaluation of the AHEC Scholars Program: Satisfaction Surveys

Satisfaction surveys help us identify needed program changes or improvements.

- Fall Orientation/Immersion Satisfaction Survey
 - Collected online from both cohorts *immediately after the Fall Orientation/Immersion*
 - Anonymous
 - Open-ended and closed-ended questions

We use Qualtrics for collecting online surveys

Please share with us any recommendations that could improve the AHEC Scholars Program for you or others.....

- Program Satisfaction Survey
 - Collected online from both cohorts at the end of the academic year
 - Anonymous
 - Open-ended and closed-ended questions

During this academic year....	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly
The interprofessional nature of the AHEC Scholars Program helped me become more familiar with other health fields I can collaborate with as a health professional.					

Evaluation of the AHEC Scholars Program: Sharing evaluation results with partners

- To maximize collaboration, we summarize and share some surveys results:
 - Fall Orientation/Immersion Satisfaction Survey
 - Year End Program Satisfaction Survey
- Written reports
 - Include *quantitative* analysis of closed-ended questions and *content analysis* of open-ended questions
 - “Verbatim” responses in Appendices
- PowerPoint presentations and discussion at regular meetings with partners

Content analysis illuminates how common certain themes are in the responses.

Verbatim responses can reveal a very useful idea brought up by even just one person.

Surveys are anonymous but we also take care to maintain anonymity by editing out identifiers in verbatim responses

Evaluation of the AHEC Scholars Program: Program End Survey

The Program End Survey helps us:

1. Identify whether AHEC Scholars is having an impact on intention to practice in a rural and/or Medically Underserved Community
2. Respond to required HRSA reporting

➤ Program End Survey....

- Is collected online at the end of the Spring semester from 2nd year Cohort only
- Asks about future plans in a format required for HRSA reporting
- Includes questions from the retrospective pre-/post tool designed by NAO on the program's impact on confidence in various areas

Because we need to share data with HRSA using a unique identifier, the Program End Survey is not anonymous.

How confident were/are you in your ability to . . .	1= Not at all Confident					to	5=Very Confident				
	BEFORE participation in the AHEC Scholars Program						AFTER participation in the AHEC Scholars Program				
... describe how social determinants affect the health of a community or a population (e.g., equity, income, education, environment, etc.)?	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
...work collaboratively with patients, communities, or other health professionals?	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

Evaluation of the AHEC Scholars Program: Engaging Scholars to participate in survey collection

Collecting surveys in person versus online

Encouraging participation in data collection

Poll Question: What other strategies does your program use to engage AHEC Scholars to participate in evaluation surveys?

Responses Received

- Gift Cards for Post Graduation, Follow Up Surveys
- Stipend
- Note that return of the survey is the required for program completion.
- Meetings
- Raffle incentives
- Enter in raffle
- Reminder emails, calls, txt, sos
- Putting the required survey on Google Classroom
- It's a required component built into their didactic work that has deadlines
- Their advisors
- They don't receive stipend until they complete post test survey
- Nagging emails
- Credit
- Stipend
- Program requirement
- Requirement to complete program
- Required for stipend distribution
- Required
- Required for stipend payment
- Required to receive certificate
- Texting
- Receiving their stipend
- Personal emails, texting, reminders
- Credit for hours
- Relationship level engagement.
- We don't
- Requirement to Redfield e program
- Email

Evaluation of the AHEC Scholars Program: One-year post Graduation Survey

The One-year post-Graduation Survey helps us:

1. Identify whether AHEC Scholars are practicing in rural and/or medically-underserved communities
2. Respond to required HRSA reporting

➤ One-year post-Graduation Survey

- Collected online from Scholars who completed the program one year prior and graduated from their program
- Asks about current employment in a format required for HRSA reporting

Is your workplace in a rural setting?

Is your workplace primarily serving a medically-underserved community?

Please describe the role that participating in AHEC Scholars has played in your career choice:

The One-year post-Graduation Survey is not anonymous; we share identified data with HRSA

➤ Challenges to data collection.....

- Email addresses that no longer reach them (no longer at the academic institution)
- Scholars whose graduation date is off from the end of their AHEC Scholars completion
- If they are heavily engaged in their first year of employment....or a residency.....they may not find the time...

LEARNING:

We now ask 2nd years for updated/“permanent” contact information.

Evaluation of the AHEC Scholars Program: Withdrawal Interviews

Withdrawal interviews help us identify whether program changes or improvements could reduce withdrawals.

- As needed, we conduct phone interviews with AHEC Scholars who have dropped out of the program.



- How did you learn about the AHEC Scholar's Program?
- Was it what you expected? [Why/Why not?]
- What led you to leave the program?
- Are still working on your degree?
- Are you planning to practice your health profession in a rural or medically underserved community?

Withdrawal interviews are not anonymous, but we do not share identifiable information

➤ What we've learned:

- Almost universally, Scholars who have dropped out tell us they just find that they do not have time for the activities...they are in school, often working, often single parents ...
- Some Scholars who've dropped out have indicated that they did not have a full understanding of the expectations of the program when they joined. We encourage our partners to provide as much information as possible when recruiting.

Learning from the Evaluation and Partners

- Changes that have been implemented:
 - Application process is now common across partners
 - Earlier development and availability of the annual schedule of activities
 - Regional Centers select Faculty Mentors for maximum familiarity with the region
 - Using a common communication platform (D2L)
 - Development of the Program Change form to keep partners involved...starting with the Scholar's academic program director who may be able to prevent the withdrawal
 - Monitoring participation in the Monthly Seminars
 - 2nd year Scholar participation in Community Immersions
 - Faculty mentor training



Thank you!

Thank you for hearing about how we do ASP at AzAHEC. We hope it was helpful!