

The New Mexico AHEC Scholars Program

New Cohort: January 2023 – August 2024 (abbreviated)

Program Description

The Area Health Education Center's (AHEC) Scholars Program is a federally funded, nation-wide initiative to create a cadre of health professionals across disciplines who are committed to providing health care to those living in rural and medically underserved communities. They will gain the skills necessary to be leaders in inter-professional clinical teams and practice transformation in primary care.

In New Mexico, the AHEC Scholars Program will enroll at least 45 students per year from across universities and colleges in a variety of health professions programs, such as graduate counseling/psychology, dental, medicine, nursing (graduate and undergraduate), occupational therapy, pharmacy, physical therapy, physician assistant, graduate population/public health, rehabilitation services, and social work.

The NM AHEC Scholars Program focuses on six core topic areas:

- Inter-professional education - a coordinated, patient-centered model of health care that involves an understanding of the contributions of multiple health care professionals
- Behavioral health integration - promotes the development of integrated primary and behavioral health services to better address the needs of individuals with mental health and substance use conditions
- Social determinants of health - includes five key areas (determinants) - economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, and neighborhood and built environment - and their impact on health
- Cultural competency - improving individual health and building healthy communities by training health care providers to recognize and address the unique culture, language, and health literacy of diverse consumers and communities
- Practice transformation - aims to fully support quality improvement and patient-centered care through goal-setting, leadership, practice facilitation, workflow changes, measuring outcomes, and adapting organizational tools and processes to support new team-based models of care delivery
- Current and emerging health issues, such as opioid addiction and the COVID-19 pandemic

Scholar Benefits

Graduates of the AHEC Scholars Program will be leaders in their fields, having gained the knowledge, skills and training to improve primary care practice outcomes through inter-professional and collaborative training and experience. In addition, NM AHEC Scholars will receive:

- Formal certificate of completion that can be added to a resume or curriculum vitae



- Intensive leadership training and skill development
- Expert mentorship and training by recognized faculty
- Participation in a state-wide interdisciplinary group of future health care leaders
- Membership in the national AHEC Scholars initiative
- Participation in the path-breaking Primary Care Area Health Education Center TeleECHO clinic
- Acknowledgment as an AHEC Scholar in graduation program
- Program-specific benefits including academic credit

Program Outcomes

At the conclusion of this program, NM AHEC scholars will be able to:

- Demonstrate an increased understanding of inter-professional healthcare and the contributions of various healthcare professionals toward the promotion of health and well-being within our state.
- Understand and promote the development of integrated primary and behavioral health services to better address the needs of individuals with mental health and substance use conditions
- Analyze the social determinants of health throughout the state - includes five key areas (determinants) - economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, and neighborhood and built environment - and their impact on health
- Model and promote cultural competency - improving individual health and building healthy communities by training health care providers to recognize and address the unique culture, language, and health literacy of diverse consumers and communities
- Promote practice transformation - aims to fully support quality improvement and patient-centered care through goal-setting, leadership, practice facilitation, workflow changes, measuring outcomes, and adapting organizational tools and processes to support new team-based models of care delivery
- Evaluate current and emerging health issues, such as opioid addiction and the COVID-19 pandemic

Expectations

AHEC scholars will complete 40 hours per year of didactic training and 40 hours per year of community-based experiential (i.e., clinical) training for a total of 80 didactic and 80 clinical hours over the course of the two-year program. **The new cohort of the NM AHEC Scholars Program will be abbreviated to 19 months each, starting in late January and ending in August of the following year. Because of the reduced amount of time, scholars in these four cohorts will only be required to complete 70 hours of didactic instruction over the course of their time in the program.**

A significant part of the didactic training will include intensive systems leadership workshops with the NM AHEC Scholar cohort. The leadership and skill development program will include a required training in Albuquerque (if allowable; virtually if restrictions are still in place due to the COVID-19

pandemic) with required follow-up video conference meetings.

In addition, scholars will participate in a series of Primary Care Area Health Education Center TeleECHO (PC AHEC TeleECHO) clinics. This first of its kind TeleECHO clinic will introduce AHEC scholars to inter-professional problem-based clinical didactics that will focus on the core topic areas as a part of common primary care case studies. These case studies will be drawn from the experiences of AHEC scholars, other health professions students, and clinic faculty.

Community-based clinical experiences will be part of the students' regular health profession programs' curriculum, not additional hours. Qualifying clinical experiences will take place in an inter-professional primary care setting in a rural and/or underserved area.

Some programs may offer academic credit for participation in the Scholars Program.

In sum, NM AHEC scholars will be expected to:

- Participate in the entire program (late Jan 2023 – Aug 2024).
- Participate in the launch of their own, and the following, cohort in Albuquerque (or virtually in 2023, if in-person gathering is prohibited due to the pandemic), which includes an orientation to the Scholars Program and a day-long leadership training and skill-building event. (Some travel expenses and lodging costs may be covered by the program.)
- Complete 70 hours of didactic curriculum during their time in the program (between late January 2023 and August 2024). The orientation, leadership training, and PC AHEC TeleECHO clinic sessions will count toward these hours. PC AHEC TeleECHO clinic sessions will be offered most Fridays year-round and there is no limit to the number of sessions scholars can attend. Credit will also be given for other activities to be announced by the program, such as attendance at regional and national conferences.
- Complete 80 hours of clinical experience during their time in the program. The AHEC program will work with each scholar's program of study to assure qualifying opportunities are made available.
- Present or co-present with another scholar at least one case or didactic presentation during their time in the program at a PC AHEC TeleECHO clinic.
- Provide feedback on various components of the program in the form of evaluations, focus groups, etc.
- Scholars are encouraged (but not required) to present a poster or participate in a workshop at a professional or academic conference, symposium, etc. during their time in the program.
- Compile a portfolio of work completed during the program. (By August 2024 for the new cohort). Examples of portfolio items include case presentation forms, proof of leadership training completion, and completed evaluations of PC AHEC TeleECHO sessions and clinical experiences.

The following are requirements from the Scholars Program funder, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and are meant to assist in assessing the impact of the Scholars Program on primary care provision in rural and underserved areas:

- Complete a survey in early summer each year in the program related to support services accessed and other HRSA funding support received during the previous year.
- Complete a survey towards the end of the second year in the program related to post-graduation intentions.
- Participate in the evaluation of the national AHEC Scholars Program by completing an assessment of knowledge and experience gains in the six core topics upon exiting the program.
- Respond to AHEC upon completion of the AHEC Scholars Program on an annual basis for updates on practice location and activities.

Documentation of Completion

Didactic curricular offerings will include the orientation (3 hours), the leadership training during orientation (3-6 hours), follow-up leadership training sessions (~1-1.5 hours each), the PC AHEC TeleECHO clinic sessions (1.5 - 2 hours each), conference attendance, and other opportunities, including other ECHO clinics focusing on opioid use disorders and the COVID-19 pandemic. Attendance will be taken at the orientation and leadership trainings. Evaluations of the PC AHEC TeleECHO sessions and other approved activities will also be used to document participation in these activities.

Scholars program-qualifying clinical experiences take place in an inter-professional primary care setting in a rural or underserved area. The location, hours, and the disciplines of the students and professionals with whom scholars worked at each clinical rotation will be documented via an evaluation form provided by the NM AHEC Scholars Program.

Scholars will compile products of their work in the program in a portfolio by August of their second year in the program. Examples of portfolio products include presentations and evaluations from the PC AHEC TeleECHO clinics, evaluations of clinical experiences, posters or presentations given at conferences, etc.

Applying to the Program

Applications for the fourth cohort, which will begin in late January, 2023, are now being accepted here: [NM AHEC Scholars Program Application.](#)

For more information about the NM AHEC Scholars Program, email
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