

Oregon
Area Health Education Center

2024 Annual Report

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WHO WE ARE

Oregon Area Health Education Center (AHEC) is part of a nationwide system created by Congress in 1971 to improve the distribution, diversity, quality and supply of health care workers in rural and under-resourced areas.

Oregon AHEC has education programs across five regional centers and a central program office housed at Oregon Health & Science University. Programs are designed to engage aspiring health care professionals at each step of their journey, which starts with career exploration in their youth, follows them through their education and continues after they obtain their credentials.

MISSION

Oregon AHEC's mission is to improve the health of individuals in rural and underserved areas through education and workforce development.

GOALS

- **Diversity:** Preparing a diverse, culturally competent primary care workforce that can address the needs of the communities we serve
- **Distribution:** Improving health care workforce distribution throughout the state, particularly among rural and underserved areas and populations
- **Practice Transformation:** Developing and maintaining a health care workforce prepared to deliver high quality care in a transforming delivery system, with an emphasis on rural and underserved communities

OUR REGIONAL CENTERS

Through education and workforce development, Oregon AHEC works to increase diversity among health professionals, broaden the distribution of the health workforce, enhance health care quality and improve health care delivery to rural and underserved Oregonians.

Our five regional centers are embedded in communities throughout the state and work with local partners to develop impactful, community-responsive programming.

Oregon Pacific AHEC

Hosted at Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital. The Center serves communities along the Oregon Coast and I-5 Corridor including the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and the counties of Benton, Clatsop, Columbia, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, Tillamook and Yamhill.



Oregon AHEC Program Office

Housed at OHSU in Portland.

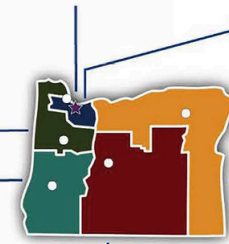


Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute

Hosted at Pacific University. The Center serves Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties.

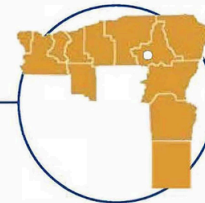
AHEC of Southwest Oregon

Hosted at Aviva Health in Roseburg. The Center provides services to Coos, Curry, Douglas, Lane, Jackson and Josephine counties.



Northeast Oregon AHEC

Located on the campus of Eastern Oregon University in La Grande. The Center serves Baker, Gilliam, Hood River, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco and Wheeler counties.



Cascades East AHEC

Hosted at St. Charles Health System in Bend. The Center serves Central and Southeastern Oregon and includes the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Harney, Jefferson, Klamath and Lake counties.



Scan the QR code to learn more about our regional centers!



MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Each year, Oregon AHEC hosts an in-person Statewide Advisory Board meeting, bringing together stakeholders and partners to review and provide guidance for our work.

During our 2024 meeting, the advisory group provided helpful feedback about advocacy, communications, how to build effective behavioral health programming and more. They also emphasized the need for more robust data about the outcomes of our pathway and AHEC Scholars Program.

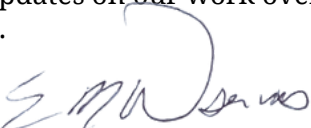
Through our current data collection methods, we already know youth and pre-professional programming is an important part of the solution to our health care workforce challenges. From our post-session surveys, nearly 100% of students in our youth programs report an increased interest in health care careers after participating in one of our summer camps. A significant percentage of our AHEC Scholars report that their intention to practice in an underserved community has increased after participating in the AHEC Scholars program. Many of us are also familiar, anecdotally, with former AHEC and Rural Scholars who are teaching the next generation of the health care workforce in our rural communities.

To further inform Oregon AHEC programming, we've initiated important next steps to bolster our data collection, management and analyses. This work will enable us to share a clearer story about the factors that influence chosen location of practice, strength of our programs and where our students ultimately end up practicing. Northeast Oregon AHEC, one of our five regional centers, has taken a lead role in this effort by investing in a



Salesforce data system that, once complete, will include over 30 years of student data. In the future, we envision this tool being implemented at each of our regional centers, so we can demonstrate which programs we offer make the greatest impact on our health care workforce needs.

As our programs continue to grow, so do our partnerships. The work of reducing health care inequity through a better distribution of the workforce, a more diverse workforce and one that is trained to innovate and transform care is not possible without our partners. We continue to be passionate about this work and see AHEC as key to better health and quality of life. I encourage you to sign up for our newsletter (see the last page) as we will be sharing more updates on our work over the course of 2025.


ERIC WISER, M.D., FAFPP
DIRECTOR

MEASURING PROGRESS

Every year, Oregon AHEC facilitates hundreds of learning opportunities for youth, students in health professions programs and professionals. Here is an overview of our programs and their impact:

Program	Purpose	Outcome
Career exploration	Develops a pathway for health care workforce in rural and underserved communities by engaging school age youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 193 campers across our five regions • Out of more than 100 students surveyed, nearly 100% said the camp made them more interested in a health care career. • The majority of students surveyed qualified for free or reduced lunch.
Professional programs	Encourages students to work in underserved areas by facilitating clinical rotations in those communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated clinical rotations in rural and underserved settings and other learning opportunities for more than 800 health professions students.
AHEC Scholars Program	Prepares health professions students for future practice in rural and underserved communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After completing the program, significantly more students reported an intention to work in rural and underserved communities. • 47% of the participants graduating in 2024 and 2025 are from a disadvantaged background.
Continuing education	Provides access to high quality education for health professionals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided education and resources to 1,955 health professionals. • Provided high quality education at low or no cost to participants. • Provided Mental Health First Aid training to 175 participants.

PATHWAY PROGRAMS

Our immersive summer camps help develop a pathway for health care professionals in underserved communities by offering high school students in every part of the state health care job shadowing, mentorship and hands-on skills and techniques.

We hosted 193 campers across all of our regional centers. Explore our camps by region:



Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute

Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute held the annual Synapse Healthcare Career Explorations Camp at Pacific University's Hillsboro campus and University of Portland's School of Nursing & Health Innovations.

The majority of the camp's 70 attendees came from Latinx/Hispanic households, and support from Care Oregon and WorkSystems allowed students to attend at no cost.



Northeast Oregon AHEC

MedQuest, Northeast Oregon AHEC's week-long health care careers exploration camp, celebrated 30 years this summer!

The camp is hosted in La Grande and expanded to The Dalles and Burns last year. Over the past 30 years, MedQuest has served 1,160 students and 85% of those surveyed have gone onto health care careers.



Oregon Pacific AHEC

Summer Steps Healthcare Career Camp, Oregon Pacific AHEC’s four-day camp at Western University of Health Sciences, provided an immersive experience to students from North Salem High School, Lebanon High School and Scio High School.



AHEC of Southwest Oregon

AHEC of Southwest Oregon’s summer camp at Umpqua Community College invited students throughout the region to explore health care careers free of cost.

Cascades East AHEC

MedStars, Cascades East AHEC’s multi-day residence camp, invited students throughout Central Oregon to learn free of cost at Central Oregon Community College in Bend.



“I really enjoyed coming and am thankful for having the opportunity to be here. I think it's a really helpful program for people who are unsure about wanting a career in the medical field.”

-Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute AHEC camper

PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

Our professional programs encourage students to work in underserved communities by providing financial support for education and clinical rotations in rural and underserved settings.

Below are just a few of the professional programs offered through our regional centers.



Regional Center pre-health programs and pre-professional programs

- AHEC of Southwest Oregon’s ReConnect Gap Year Fellowship and Clinical Rotation Hub
- Cascade East AHEC’s Clinical Rotations, InterProfessional Training and Independent Job Shadowing
- Oregon Pacific AHEC’s Next Steps and Next Steps Service Learning

85%

of ReConnect Gap Year Fellows surveyed said they were extremely likely to pursue a career in health care after participating in the program. That is up from 47% before participating in the program.



“Extremely valuable program, led me to value my hometown. Without this I would have never considered returning.”

-ReConnect Gap Year Fellow

AHEC SCHOLARS PROGRAM

AHEC Scholars is a two-year national program designed to better prepare health profession students for future practice in rural and urban underserved communities.

We partner with private and public colleges and universities around Oregon to recruit Scholars training to become doctors (MD & DO), physician assistants, occupational therapists, pharmacists, dentists, nurse practitioners and physical therapists.

We started the Scholars Program in 2018 with 71 students and seven active programs. We have since expanded to 115 students annually across 13 programs and are in talks to add more. **Here is where our Scholars train:**

Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU)

School of Dentistry — DMD
School of Medicine — MD
School of Medicine — PA
School of Nursing — NP

OHSU and Oregon State University (OSU)

College of Pharmacy — PharmD

OSU - Cascades

Doctor of Physical Therapy — DPT

Pacific University

College of Physician Assistant Studies — PA
College of Pharmacy — PharmD
School of Occupational Therapy — OTD

Western University of Health Sciences

College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific Northwest — DO
College of Health Sciences NW — DPT

Frontier Nursing University

Nurse Practitioner Program — NP

Mt. Hood Community College

Nursing program — B.S.N.



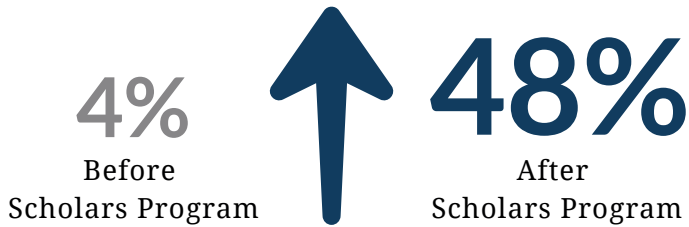
“I would highly recommend the AHEC program to any student considering a career in rural medicine, as it provides invaluable insights and a supportive learning environment tailored to our future practice needs.”

-Lauren March, PA-S, OHSU

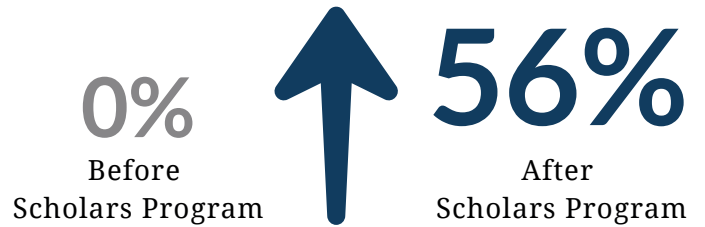
Scholars' interest in practicing in rural Oregon

Significantly more students from the 2024 graduating cohort reported they intend to practice in rural and underserved areas after participating in the Scholars Program than before starting the program.

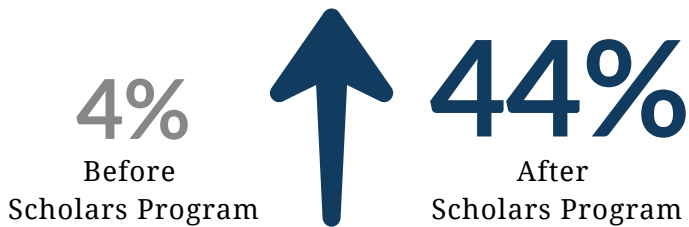
Highly or fully intend to practice in a rural primary health clinic



Highly or fully intend to practice at a federally qualified health center



Highly or fully intend to practice at a critical access hospital/other rural hospital



Below are some more data points related to our Scholars graduating in 2024 and 2025:

- **More than one third of Scholars** identified as being part of an under-represented minority group.
- **41% of Scholars** come from a rural background.

Where our Scholars have ended up

Below, our preliminary analysis of the AHEC Scholars who graduated between 2020 - 2023 (PA, NP, DMD and PharmD Scholars only) demonstrates promising trends.

40% have placed in **rural areas.**

9% have placed in **urban underserved areas.**

66% of our Scholars across all communities have **stayed in Oregon.**

We are in process of collecting comparison data to better analyze workforce trends, and we have a comprehensive alumni survey underway to complete the picture of where our Scholars are practicing.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

We provide a variety of educational opportunities, including a suite of Project ECHO programming, ongoing CME coursework and lectures and state-of-the-art simulation training to health professionals designed to reduce professional isolation, disseminate best practices and improve healthcare quality for medically underserved communities.



Project ECHO

The primary aim of this programming is to increase access to specialist expertise intended to improve participants' knowledge, skills and processes to deliver care, and increase the number of local experts through clinician expert mentoring and peer-to-peer learning.

- 123 participants registered across three programs this year:
 - Clinical Experiential Teaching ECHO
 - Dental Preceptor ECHO
 - Diabetes Care Management ECHO
- How participants responded to the survey question, "What changes do you plan to make in your practice as a result of the Clinical Experiential Teaching ECHO?":
 - Better consideration of learners' cultural background
 - Understand student expectations and learning style
 - Better understanding of generational differences



Simulation Education

Through a competitive federal Simulation Education Training (SET) supplemental grant obtained by Oregon AHEC, state-of-the-art simulation training resources were made available across 27 counties to help prepare and train rural emergency responders to handle irregular trauma cases.

- This year, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden secured additional funding for Northeast Oregon AHEC to purchase an advanced maternal and neonatal simulation system. The investment is crucial for the region and will bolster maternal health training in Eastern Oregon.

OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you for partnering with Oregon AHEC and our mission to improve the health of rural and underserved Oregonians through education and workforce development.



Oregon AHEC sustains programs with a diverse mix of funding and support:

- Federal grants
- State appropriations
- Statewide grants
- Nonprofit grants
- Host site contributions
- Other investments

Consider making a gift today!

The Dr. John Saultz AHEC Scholars endowment fund helps remove financial barriers for Oregon health care students by supplementing travel and housing costs during rural rotations and other educational needs.

Double your impact: Your donation to the endowment fund will be matched through *December 31, 2024*.



Keep in touch!

