

Office of Primary Care and
Area Health Education Centers (AHEC)

AHEC Scholars Summer Projects 2025

January 22, 2025
12:00 PM



Agenda

- AHEC Scholars Program
- Introduce project faculty and staff
- AHEC Summer Projects
 - Education and Mentoring
 - Research and Quality Improvement
- Hear from past summer project students
- How to apply
- Questions

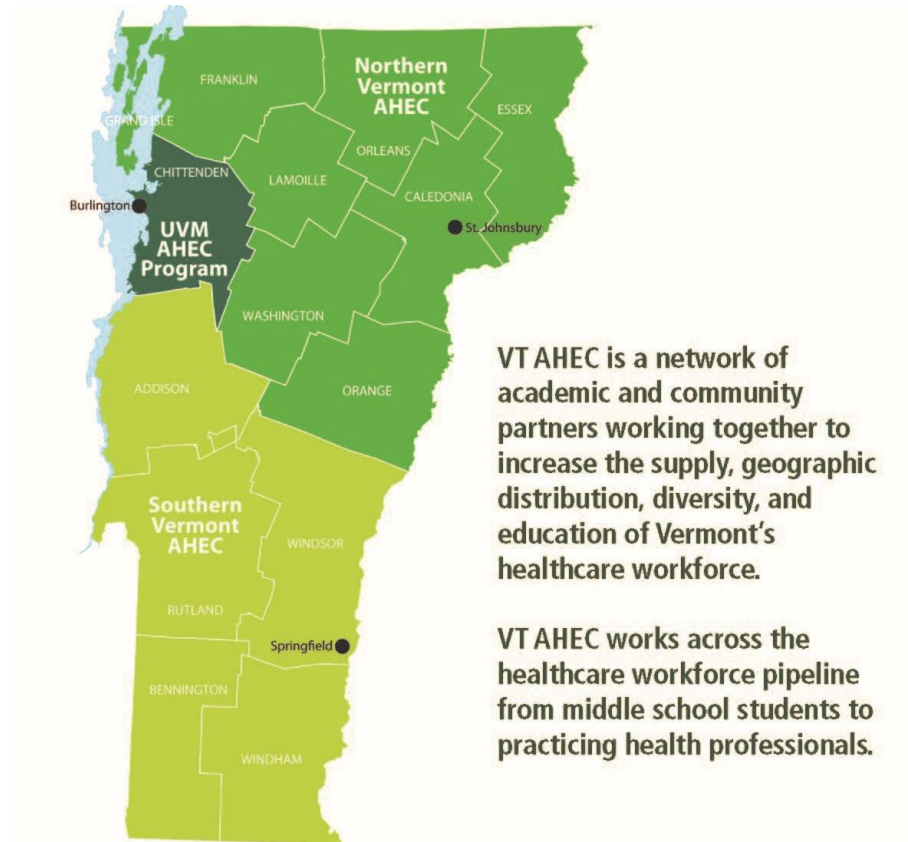


National AHEC Scholars Program

Voluntary program for health professions students interested in supplementing their education by gaining additional knowledge and experience in rural and/or underserved settings

- Duration
 - At least two years
 - Each year includes at least 40 hours of didactic training and 40 hours of experiential or clinical training
- 8 Core Priority Areas
- Students with at least two years of eligible activities receive recognition as a VT AHEC Scholar at commencement

THE VERMONT AHEC NETWORK



VT AHEC is a network of academic and community partners working together to increase the supply, geographic distribution, diversity, and education of Vermont's healthcare workforce.

VT AHEC works across the healthcare workforce pipeline from middle school students to practicing health professionals.

AHEC and UVM project faculty and staff

▪ NVAHEC

- Nicole LaPointe, EdD, MSW, Lanie Billings and Tracy Truzansky
- GIV Institute on Health & Medicine NORTH

▪ SVAHEC

- Jennifer Scott, PsyD, Amanda Richardson and Susan White
- GIV Institute on Health & Medicine SOUTH & research project

▪ Larner Office of Primary Care & AHEC

- Charles MacLean, MD
- Mark Pasanen, MD
- Kathy Mariani, MD
- Patti Smith Urie - AHEC Scholars Program and Summer Projects Coordinator patti.smith-urie@uvm.edu

▪ UVM Health Network

- Clinical Informatics team – Drs. Michelle Cangiano, Rachel McEntee, Alicia Jacobs, Marie Sandoval, Jim Li, Sean Mahoney
- Other project faculty – Drs. Sujata Singh, Ben Clements, Elly Riser



AHEC Summer Projects

Complete description and application information:

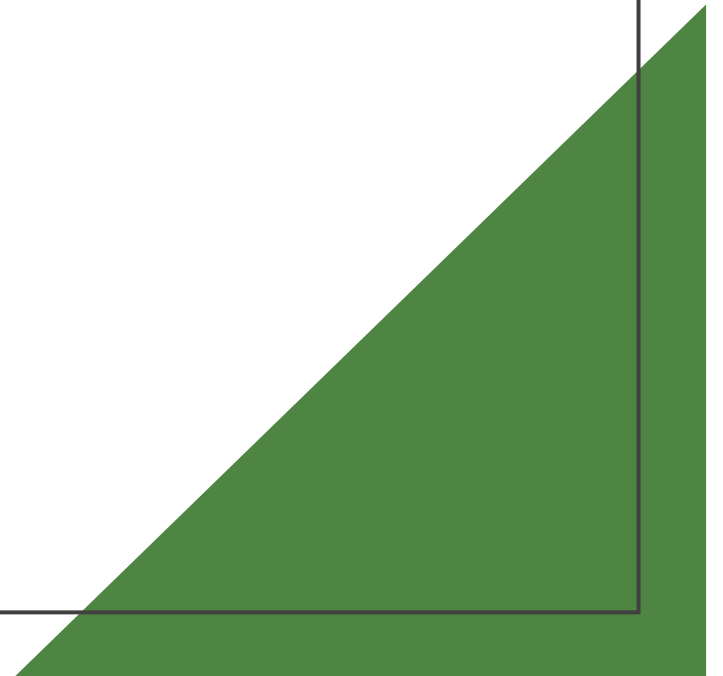
[Student Projects, AHEC, Larner College of Medicine, University of Vermont \(uvm.edu\)](#)

Application: <https://redcap.link/SummerProjectsApplication2025>

Summer Projects 2025

- Two Tracks
 - Education and Mentoring Track
 - Research and Quality Improvement Track
- The typical time commitment is 100 hours
 - 40 didactic (reading, online modules, asynchronous discussions)
 - Approximately 60 hours of field work (specific project)
- Students receive a stipend of \$1500
- The summer program meets the requirements for one year of eligible activities toward the AHEC Scholars Program.

Education and Mentoring Track



Education & Mentoring Track

40 Didactic hours - Leading Learning Teams - developed and led by Nicole LaPointe, EdD, MSW

Synchronous and asynchronous discussions, in person and via Zoom and MS Teams

In-person learning

In-person Orientation: **Wed, June 4, 5:30-7:00 PM**

In-person Training: **Wed, June 25, 9:00AM-3:00PM**

In-person End-of-project Meeting: **Wed, August 7 5:30-7:00 PM**

Asynchronous learning

Part 1 (estimated 22 hours): Recommended to complete by **Monday, June 23**

Part 2 (estimated 10 hours): Complete by **Wednesday, August 6**

Virtual meetings

GIV Debrief & Check-In Meeting: **Wed, July 23, 5:30-7:00 Zoom**

End-of-Project meeting: **Wed, August 6, 5:30-6:30 PM Zoom**

60 Field hours: Work in teams as teachers and mentors for high school students enrolled in the Governor's Institutes of Vermont Institute on Health & Medicine

GIV NORTH

Northern Vermont AHEC

Nicole Lapointe
Lanie Billings
Tracy Truzansky

Vermont State University
Lyndon Campus



The Governor's Institutes of Vermont Institute on Health & Medicine NORTH

8-day in-person commitment, plus 1 day of virtual orientation

Sat, July 5 - Sat, July 12 at VTSU Lyndon Campus

Lodging and meals provided

Science enrichment and career exploration for 70 highschoolers. Mentors lead and assist in teaching clinical skills. Content is delivered through hands-on activities, scenario-based learning, and case discussion.

[The Health & Medicine Institute | GIV](#)



GIV SOUTH

Southern Vermont AHEC

Jennifer Scott
Amanda Richardson

Vermont State University
Castleton Campus



The Governor's Institutes of Vermont Institute on Health & Medicine SOUTH



8-day in-person commitment, plus virtual orientation



Sat, July 12 - Sat, July 19 Vermont State University Castleton Campus

Lodging and meals provided

Mentors lead and assist in teaching clinical skills. Content for the 2025 institute features a primary and preventive care theme.

[The Health & Medicine Institute | GIV](#)

Quote from 2024 Larner GIV mentor:

GIV is a great opportunity for folks that enjoy teaching and sharing their love of healthcare/scientific disciplines with others. The students were incredibly brave and ambitious. I was proud to see students try new things, like the heart and brain dissections sessions I led. We had the opportunity to provide sessions around topics we felt strongly about. I led a pharmacology session exploring common medications and designing enteric-coated pills, very fun! Truly a great experience. It was nice that GIV was very front-loaded in the summer and left a lot of free time in the second half of the summer.





“Talking to RAs, mentors, and professionals makes me feel like I'm on the right track and more confident that I can achieve my goals.”



“I think that Emergency Medicine is super important for everyone to know even if they don't go into the medical field.
I LOVED IT.”

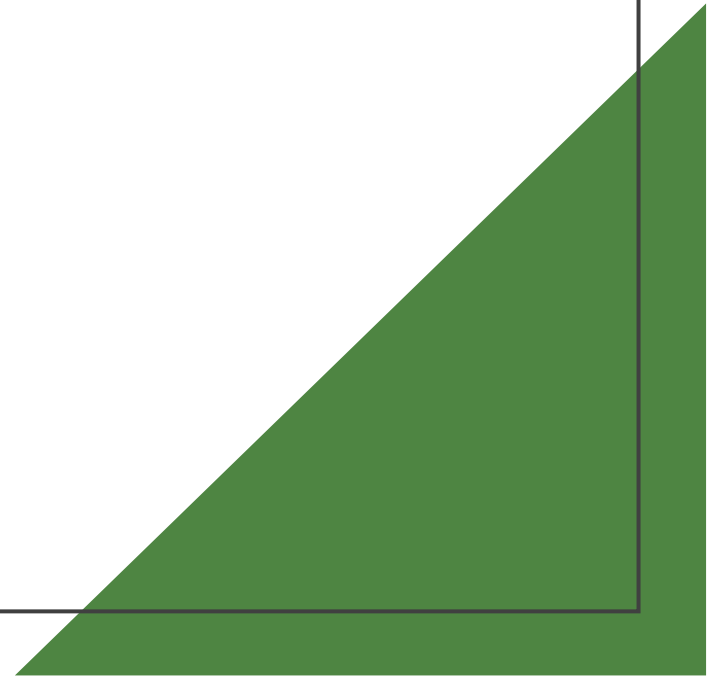
“Practicing medical specific skills helped me realize my capability for things I thought would be too much for me”.



“I know now that I'm very interested in being a respiratory therapist, a nurse, or a doctor.”



Research/Quality Improvement Track

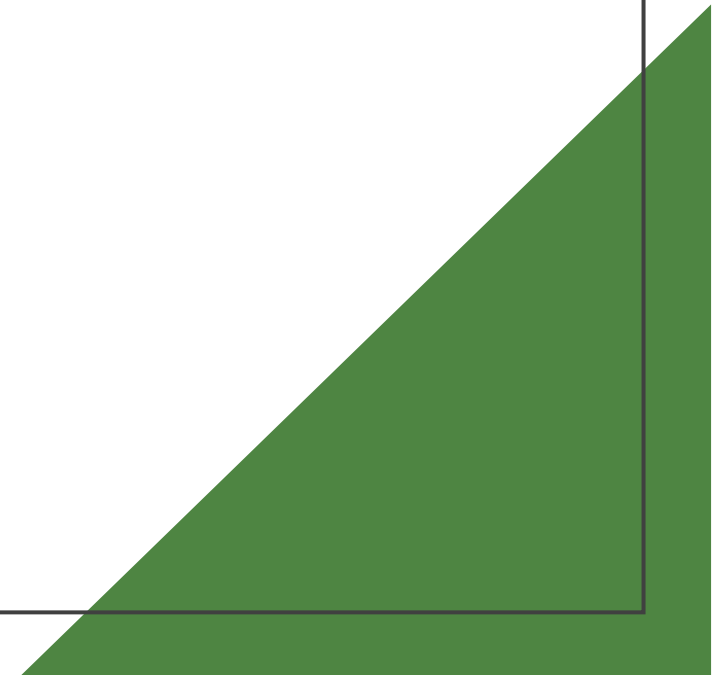


The overarching goal is for students to gain a valuable understanding of social and cultural factors that influence an individual's overall health and their ability to access care.

- All projects relate to one or more AHEC Scholars priority areas

Research/QI track will also focus on

- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Engagement with community agencies
- Quality deliverables for entry in UVM ScholarWorks
- Supporting individual student goals



Research/Quality Improvement Track

40 Didactic hours – led by UVM AHEC

- Research textbook and online QI modules from Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)
- Asynchronous discussion of weekly assignments on Microsoft Teams

~60 Field hours

- Work in teams of 2-5. Identified topic areas, with flexibility for the team to shape the direction.
- Projects may include literature reviews, surveys, primary data collection, provider or patient interviews, data analysis, writing up results, and editing.

Deliverables

- Individual – Personal reflection (1-2 pages)
- Group - Project Abstract and project specific deliverables (e.g. poster) determined by the team

Dates

In-person Orientation: Tues, May 27 | 5:30-7:00 PM

Zoom Mid-Summer Check-in: July 15 | 5:30-7:00 PM

In-person Final meeting: Tues, August 20 | 5:30-7:00 PM

Projects run from June 23 - August 8.

Individual project teams determine the schedule of project-specific meetings.

Child Health Screening with Champlain Valley Head Start

Faculty: Kathy Mariani, MD, Family Medicine; Sujata Singh, MD, Ophthalmologist; Patti Smith Urie

Collaborators: Justine Mee, Health Services Coordinator, Champlain Valley Head Start

- CVHS serves 230 children. Enrolled children receive hearing and vision screening each fall. Usually 10-15% of children need vision follow-up after screening and 20-25% need hearing follow-up.
- Larner students worked on projects with CVHS, including health follow-up events with providers such as Ophthalmologist Sujata Singh to assist families with timely follow-up on concerns.
- The group has identified a need for family-friendly materials that explain what to do if your child's screening shows need for referral and information about vision and hearing conditions. Materials will be translated into 4 of the most common languages for Head Start families— Nepali, Swahili, Somali and Spanish.

This project may appeal to students interested in ophthalmology or hearing, early child development, pediatrics, cultural responsiveness, or health literacy and the communication of health information. Experience/interest in translation of health information a plus.

There is likely to be a combination of in-person and virtual activities.

Clinical Informatics and Electronic Health Record Projects

Faculty: Rachel McEntee, MD (Hospitalist and CMIO); Alicia Jacobs, MD (Family Medicine and Medical Director of Wellbeing Informatics); Sean Maloney, MD (Family Medicine and Dept of FM Director of Clinical Informatics); Michelle Cangiano, MD (Family Medicine and FM Quality Chair); Marie Sandoval, MD (General Internal Medicine and Medical Director of Digital Health); Yao “Jim” Li, MD (Hospitalist and Dept of Medicine Director of Clinical Informatics); and Mark Pasanen, MD

“Informaticists accelerate healthcare’s transformation by collecting, analyzing and applying data directly to care decisions.” (AMIA [Why Informatics?](#))

The informatics team will support three projects.

1. **EHR - Documentation Project**

Potential project areas: Note templates, clinical decision support, and AI-enabled note writing

2. **EHR - Equity Project**

Potential project areas: Provider gender impact on workload, patient access to care, and EHR functionality

3. **EHR - Communication Project**

Potential project areas: Provider-Patient communication, such as patient portal, and Provider-Provider communication, such as eConsults and SecureChat

These projects may appeal to students who are interested in informatics, health literacy, physician-patient communication, or patient education/activation.

Projects can be completed remotely.

Medical Debt Project with Office of the Health Care Advocate

Faculty: Mark Pasanen, MD and Patti S. Urie **Collaborators:** Emma Zavez, Health Policy Analyst (Vermont Legal Aid)

- Medical debt and ability to pay for health care is a critical social driver of health.
- In 2022, Vermont Legal Aid HCA advocated for legislation to create minimum standards for hospital financial assistance, billing, and collections policies. Act 119 was signed into Vermont law and went into effect on July 1, 2024.

Overall project focus: To describe the progress of Vermont hospitals in meeting the educational and outreach requirements in Act 119 and identify ways to gauge patient experience navigating financial assistance programs.

This project may appeal to students interested in advocacy and legislation, plain language communication of health information, healthcare funding, medical debt and ability to pay for healthcare. Some parts could be completed remotely/ some travel to hospitals to observe practices and conduct interviews.

Immigrant Health Project

Faculty: Ben Clements, MD and Mark Pasanen, MD

- Several AHEC projects have focused on the intersection between immigration law and health care, including VT health insurance options for immigrants.
- Health care insurance and eligibility rules for financial assistance programs can be complex in general. Immigration status adds a layer of complexity. Political climate and policy changes may heighten concern about sharing information.

Overall project focus: Determine what information about immigrant health care in Vermont is needed by various groups, such as health care providers, community agencies, and members of immigrant communities, and work with partners to develop strategies for dissemination.

This project may appeal to students interested in advocacy, healthcare funding, and social determinants of health such as health insurance status and ability to pay for healthcare. There is likely to be a combination of in-person and virtual activities.

Justice, Mentoring, and Re-entry Program at Mercy Connections

Faculty: Charles MacLean, MD; Patti Smith Urie, Office of Primary Care/AHEC

Collaborators: Kelly Moran, MSW, Mercy Connections

- Many individuals with substance use disorder are involved with the criminal justice system. The intersections between physical health, mental health, social determinants of health, substance use and criminal justice must be acknowledged and addressed.
- There is current interest in bringing lifestyle medicine topics to women at the South Burlington women's facility and Mercy Connections community programs. VT Corrections is recently open to volunteers offering 'Mind, Body, Soul' themed activities, which may be a good fit for Larner students interested in nutrition, movement, and other lifestyle topics.

Overall project focus: Better understand the reentry process, where there are gaps in services, and where there are opportunities for improvement, including lifestyle medicine opportunities.

Project may appeal to students interested in the intersection of complex social issues and medical care, Lifestyle or Integrative Medicine, Addiction Medicine, and community engagement. There is likely to be a combination of in-person and virtual activities.

Xylazine Education

Faculty: Elly Riser, MD; Mark Pasanen

Collaborators: Vermont Department of Health Division of Substance Use

- Over the last several years, xylazine is increasingly being identified in forensic samples of the drug supply across the United States.
- The presence of xylazine creates additional challenges in the care of people using drugs.
- There is a need for education for various audiences to improve recognition and management of the effects of xylazine.

Overall project focus: To develop, disseminate and deliver educational materials that will improve recognition of the effects of xylazine, including withdrawal symptoms, and lead to improvement in wound care. The target audiences potentially include individuals and teams in EMS, nursing, community agencies and provider offices.

This project may appeal to students interested in the intersection of complex social issues and medical care, Addiction Medicine, and community engagement. There is likely to be a combination of in-person and virtual activities.

Water Quality in Rutland City with SVTAHEC



Faculty: Amanda Richardson, MA, and Jennifer Scott, PsyD, Southern Vermont AHEC

Collaborators: Ted Gillen, E.I., Associate Engineer and Tom Garofano, Water Division Manager & Chief Operator, City of Rutland

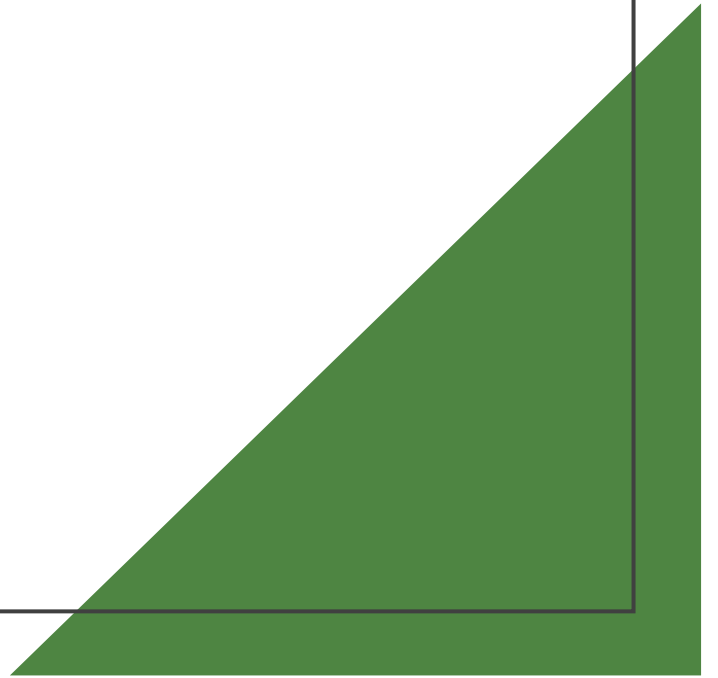
- The [City of Rutland](#) has had several drinking water-related issues publicly deliberated in the past several years—notably fluoridation and most recently how to treat haloacetic acid levels.
- While municipal water is highly regulated and there is publicly available information about water treatment and testing, the public’s understanding of the health-related impacts of drinking water quality and access to safe drinking water are important health equity issues.
- Students will work with the City of Rutland to develop and carry out a project related to municipal water quality and health.

Project may appeal to students interested in public health, health equity, health literacy, and communication of health information. While most activities could be completed remotely, it would be preferred if at least one team member was available for an in-person visit to Rutland facilities.

2024 Summer Project Student Panel

Class of 2027

- 31 Students did a Research/QI Project
- 18 Students did an Education/Mentoring Project
- 10 did a project in both tracks



How to apply

- Please read the complete summer program description prior to starting the application.
- Complete the application at:
<https://redcap.link/AHECSummerProjects2024Application>
 - Be prepared to attach your CV/resume
 - You may apply for more than one project
- This is a competitive process and decisions will be based on the best match for each program
- Application deadline **February 21, 2025**

Questions

If you have questions about this program or its application, please contact Patti at patti.smith-urie@uvm.edu



AHEC Summer Projects

Complete description and application information:

[Student Projects, AHEC, Larner College of Medicine, University of Vermont \(uvm.edu\)](#)

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