



### AHEC Scholars Summer Projects: 2024

The Vermont AHEC Network offers a variety of opportunities for medical students enrolled in the VT AHEC Scholars Program during the summer between first and second year. The AHEC Scholars Program is a national program guided by AHEC’s Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant requirements. The overarching goal of the AHEC Scholars Program is for students to gain a valuable understanding about the social and cultural factors that influence an individual’s overall health and their ability to access care. We aim to prepare tomorrow’s health professionals to be leaders in interprofessional, transformative practice, especially for those with the greatest needs. Additional goals of the summer projects are to increase students’ knowledge and skills in research and quality improvement, medical education and mentorship, teamwork and collaboration, and to foster a lifelong interest in scholarly activity. The program is designed to be relevant to students interested in any medical specialty. All AHEC projects relate to the national AHEC Scholars Priorities.

The AHEC Scholars Program is a voluntary, nationally recognized program for health professions students. It provides opportunities for students to increase knowledge, strengthen leadership skills, and gain competencies within eight broad topic areas.

The AHEC Scholars Program and all of its activities are part of AHEC’s longitudinal workforce research about influences on specialty selection and future practice—location, type of practice, and the patient population served.

#### Eight AHEC Scholars Priorities

| Topic   | Emphasis or examples  |
|---|---|
| Interprofessional Education   | -team-based care and patient-centered care  |
| Behavioral Health Integration   | -services that better address the needs of individuals with behavioral, mental health and substance use conditions, including training for health professionals to address burnout and resiliency |
| Connecting Communities and Supporting Health Professionals/ Community Health Workers (CHWs) | -increase training and development of paraprofessionals who serve as connectors between health professionals and the community  |
| Virtual Learning and Telehealth   | -leverage technology to improve curricula and community-based experiential training   |
| Social Determinants of Health   | -addressing food insecurity, economic inequality, access to education, social and community context, access to health care, neighborhood and built environment, etc.                              |
| Cultural Competency   | -care that address the unique culture, language and health literacy of diverse communities  |
| Medical Practice Transformation   | -quality improvement, care coordination, cost containment, rural health care, primary care, care for underserved or disadvantaged populations   |
| Current and Emerging Health Issues  | -current HRSA-approved topics: Opioids and Substance Use Disorders, Oral Health as part of Overall Health, COVID-19   |

## SUMMER PROJECT FORMAT AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The time commitment is approximately 100 hours: 40 hours of didactic (reading, online modules, discussions, and self-guided learning) and 60 hours of field work (i.e., the specific project). The summer program meets the requirements for one year of eligible activities toward the AHEC Scholars Program. Stipends for summer projects are typically \$1,500. Many students complete an AHEC project alongside other summer opportunities.

AHEC Scholars Summer Projects are hosted by three organizations: UVM AHEC Program, Northern Vermont AHEC and Southern Vermont AHEC. The AHEC Scholars Summer Projects have two tracks:

### 1. Research and Quality Improvement Track

#### Didactic hours

Core curriculum is led by UVM Office of Primary Care and AHEC Program. Required components include basic instruction in quality improvement and research methods conducted via asynchronous discussion of weekly assignments on Microsoft Teams. Materials include the textbook *Designing Clinical Research* by Hulley and colleagues, and online modules from the *Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)*. Students earn an IHI Certificate of Quality Improvement and Patient Safety.

#### Field hours

Students typically work on projects in teams of 2-5. The faculty and staff develop several topic areas each year, but there is flexibility for the team to shape the direction of the project. The individual projects may include literature reviews, development or pilot testing of surveys or patient assessment instruments, primary data collection, provider or patient interviews, data analysis, writing up results, and editing. Students planning to be out of state for the summer may be able to participate in some projects remotely, other projects require at least some time in Vermont for in-person activities.

#### Learning objectives

Upon completion of this training, AHEC Scholars will:

- i. Understand the basic concepts of research project design
- ii. Be prepared to apply concepts of quality improvement in healthcare
- iii. Experience and practice Microsoft Teams as an effective collaboration tool
- iv. Be able to articulate the importance of the national AHEC Scholar Priorities as they relate to quality and equity in healthcare

#### Meeting dates

|                               |                           |                     |                  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Summer Projects Orientation   | <b>Tuesday, May 28</b>    | <b>5:30-7:00 PM</b> | <b>In-Person</b> |
| Mid-Summer Check-in           | <b>Tuesday, July 17</b>   | <b>5:30-7:00 PM</b> | <b>Zoom</b>      |
| Summer Projects Final meeting | <b>Tuesday, August 20</b> | <b>5:30-7:00 PM</b> | <b>In-Person</b> |

Didactic instruction and field projects run from **Monday, June 17 - Friday, August 9**.

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

#### Deliverables

##### Due by Friday, August 9

1. One-to-two-page (individual) reflection on what you have learned, the skills you have acquired, and how your participation in the summer curriculum relates to the AHEC Scholar priorities.
2. Documentation of required learning module completion (IHI Certificate in Quality and Patient Safety).
3. Project Abstract--Brief (250-300 word) summary of the project (one report for the team).
4. Other deliverables (e.g., poster, data analysis) are project dependent and determined by the team.
5. Brief evaluation form completed at the final meeting on Thursday, August 20.

## 2. Education and Mentoring Track

### Didactic hours

Core curriculum is led by Northern Vermont AHEC). Required components include readings from the book *The Fearless Organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth* by Amy Edmondson and other materials. Students participate in synchronous and asynchronous discussions via zoom and Microsoft Teams.

### Field hours

Students work in teams as teachers and mentors for high school students enrolled in the Governor's Institutes of Vermont Institute on Health & Medicine, or other health care pipeline-related projects.

### Learning objectives

Upon completion of this training, AHEC Scholars will:

- i. Understand the role of a mentor in goal-focused groups
- ii. Apply strategies for effective group development in learning teams
- iii. Describe the Learning Zones framework and Tuckman's model of group development as they apply to teaching and learning
- iv. Ask purposeful questions and apply related STEM teaching methods

### Meeting Dates

Education and Mentoring Projects Orientation: **Wednesday, May 29 5:30-7:00 PM In-Person**

Mid-Point Check-In: **Scheduled by arrangement**

End-of-Project meeting: **Wednesday, August 7 5:30-7:00 PM In-Person**

Project-specific dates and expectations are listed in the project descriptions below.

### Deliverables

#### Due by Friday, August 9

1. One-to-two-page (individual) reflection on what you have learned, the skills you have acquired, and how your participation in the summer curriculum relates to the AHEC Scholar priorities.
2. Documentation of required learning module completion.
3. Brief evaluation form completed at the End-of-Project meeting on August 7

Stipends may be available to participants for certain AHEC projects. If a stipend is offered, it is a taxable transaction for income tax purposes and a 1099 Form will be issued.

## Summer 2024 Research/QI Projects

### 1. Food Systems Projects (UVM AHEC)

**Faculty:** Mark Pasanen, MD (Internal Medicine); Patti Smith Urie **Collaborators:** Julia MacGibeny, Impact and Access Manager (CVOEO); Susana Penfield, Food Hub Supervisor, Feeding Chittenden (CVOEO) and others

#### Background

- Access to healthy food is a critical social determinant of health (SDOH). Healthy eating is influenced by many factors, such as transportation, availability, nutrition and food preparation knowledge, cost, cultural background, eating habits, health conditions and specific dietary needs.
- Charitable food programs have a long history of addressing hunger. In recent years many have incorporated additional aims related to overcoming stigma, providing culturally appropriate foods, reducing food waste, incorporating nutrition education, increasing healthier options, and supporting local farmers and food systems.
- Nationally and in Vermont, healthcare providers are implementing SDOH screening and developing referral procedures and programs to support healthy eating.
- Collaborative efforts have resulted in the development of innovative strategies to address problems of food insecurity in Vermont communities. One such effort, the Food Access Network, launched an online ordering system called PantrySoft to tailor weekly food boxes that are delivered to homes or picked up by recipients. See [Online ordering system created for Vermonters facing food insecurity - VTDigger](#).
- A previous AHEC summer project categorized the nutritional value of the foods stocked at Feeding Chittenden and Addison Food Shelf. Using data from the PantrySoft App, they tracked the foods offered and the foods ordered/distributed, analyzed by county and drop-off locations. Potential future directions include additional analysis of data by demographic factors and studying potential changes in ordering trends based on how foods are listed in PantrySoft.

Overall project focus: How can healthcare providers and community organizations partner to make progress in the areas of food security and access to healthy food? Activities could include assisting CVOEO staff in reviewing Food Access Network data to analyze trends, present data to stakeholders, and identify potential methods for collection of new data. Building on previous LCOM student work, demographic analysis could focus on referral source – such as CVOEO programs serving preschoolers, refugee and immigrant groups, or health care provider partners. Food systems projects are good fit for students who will be in the Burlington area and have an interest in visiting programs in Addison, Chittenden, and Franklin Counties. Students participating remotely may be interested in the data analysis aspects of the project.

#### Potential questions or goals for 2024

- Examine the CVOEO Food Access Program in the Champlain Valley as an example of community agency and healthcare program collaboration to address food security/healthy eating.
- How do regional differences in the Champlain Valley (Addison, Chittenden and Franklin County) communities impact the program design? What can be learned from analysis of PantrySoft ordering data to help CVOEO better understand the specific populations that utilize the food access program?
- What do healthcare providers know about the Food Access Network program? What is the experience of healthcare providers? What are barriers/opportunities for improvement?
- How can CVOEO collect and use data for program improvement and to describe program impact?

## 2. Electronic Medical Record projects (UVM AHEC)

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**Faculty:** Rachel McEntee, MD (Hospitalist and Informaticist); Alicia Jacobs, MD (Family Medicine); Sean Maloney, MD (Family Medicine); Michelle Cangiano, MD (Family Medicine); Marie Sandoval, MD (General Internal Medicine); and Yao “Jim” Li, MD (Hospital Medicine)

### Background

- The EMR faculty group has mentored highly successful projects that appeal to students who are interested in informatics, health literacy, physician-patient communication, or patient education/activation. We anticipate being able to support several EMR projects, with specific project topics and goals developed by the project team. Potential options:

Patient portal to the EMR (Epic patient portal is called MyChart)

- EMR patient portals allow patients to access to their medical records for bi-directional messaging and review of data and notes generated by the health care team.
- It is not clear how well patients can navigate the MyChart and understand results and notes.
- Prior summer projects have explored patient and clinician perspectives on what aspects of MyChart communications are working well and which need improvement.

Standardization of documentation

- There are myriad ways in which clinicians document in the medical record. There are ongoing efforts in the Medical Informatics group to make medical documentation as efficient, accurate, and understandable as it can be. Artificial Intelligence is starting to be used to support documentation. A team could focus on the dissemination or assessment of these initiatives.

E-consultation

- Given the limited availability and long wait times for specialty consultation, our health system has established an e-consult system in which a specialist, in response to a request from primary care, reviews a patient’s clinical record and provides a very prompt consultation.
- An ongoing student project started in 2022 assessed the patient perspective. A summer project for 2024 could build on the findings by getting broader input from patients, assessing clinician perspective, or assessing the effect on consultation volume and wait times.

Modern Approach to Prostate Cancer Screening (MAPS) Tool

- Clinical decision support tools offer information or guidance to clinicians and/or patients at the “point of care”, where the information can be most useful. A multidisciplinary group of clinicians developed and deployed the MAPS to help patients make decisions about prostate cancer screening.
- The MAPS tool has been operational for 5 years, but its impact has not been assessed. A potential project would be to assess the impact of MAPS on prostate cancer detection.

Equity, Access, and Quality

- UVM Health Network has initiatives targeted at improving screening for cancer, depression, social determinants of health, and chronic disease management (e.g., Hypertension, Diabetes).
- A summer project would focus on one or more of these programs, including barriers to care.

Overall project focus: A high-level goal of the EMR projects is to expose students to the complexity of the EMR+, including an understanding of how a career that includes medical informatics is open to physicians from every specialty. EMR projects can be completed by students participating remotely.

### Potential questions or goals for 2024

The project specific goals are listed above. Which projects move forward during the summer of 2023 will depend on the interests and experience of the students involved.

### 3. Office of the Health Care Advocate: IHIP Project (UVM AHEC)

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**Faculty:** Mark Pasanen, MD; Charles MacLean, MD; Patti S. Urie **Collaborators:** Mike Fisher, VT Chief Health Care Advocate (Vermont Legal Aid); Alicia Rodrigue, Communications Coordinator (Vermont Legal Aid)

#### Background

- The Office of the Health Care Advocate (HCA) works to address access to care and health equity across Vermont. A consumer assistance phone line handles about 300 cases a month. Analyzing the content of the calls provides a window into what is or is not working and the kinds of problems people are facing.
- The HCA also has a Public Policy and Advocacy team. This team works to identify key healthcare topics, provide recommendations, and advocate within statewide forums including the Vermont Statehouse.
- The HCA believes that all people in Vermont deserve access to affordable, quality health care, including those shut out of existing health insurance programs due to their immigration status. As a partial remedy, the HCA advocated for state legislation to create the Immigrant Health Insurance Plan (IHIP), a health insurance plan for pregnant people and children under age 19 who do not qualify for Dr. Dynasaur (Vermont's Medicaid program for children).
- IHIP went into effect on July 1, 2022, and while many children and pregnant people have enrolled in the program, there have been challenges that have proven that the existence of a health insurance plan does not guarantee access to care. Factors such as a burdensome application process, language access, application processing challenges, and an expanding population of eligible residents have all contributed to implementation complications. These issues have created a discrepancy between those in our state who are eligible for IHIP and those able to enroll.

This project may appeal to students interested in advocacy and legislation, healthcare funding, and social determinants of health such as health insurance status and ability to pay for healthcare. This project may include interviews with advocates, legislators, and IHIP applicants. While some parts of the project could be completed remotely, at least some project team members should plan to be available for in-person interviews.

#### Potential questions or goals for 2024

- Understand the intersection between immigration status and health insurance eligibility in Vermont.
- Identify factors that prevent a qualified Vermont resident from enrolling in IHIP.
- Research the demographics of Vermont's immigrant/ migrant community and how this intersects with an expanding population of those who qualify for IHIP.
- Propose policy solutions that could lead to quality improvement for IHIP enrollment.

### 4. Office of the Healthcare Advocate: Act 119 (UVM AHEC)

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**Faculty:** Charles MacLean, MD; Patti S. Urie **Collaborators:** Mike Fisher, VT Chief Health Care Advocate (Vermont Legal Aid); Emma Zavez, Health Policy Analyst (Vermont Legal Aid)

#### Background

- Medical debt is a current priority for the Office of the Healthcare Advocate (HCA) and was the focus for a 2023 AHEC summer project.
- During the 2022 Legislative Session, the HCA advocated for legislation that would create minimum standards for Vermont's hospital financial assistance and billing and collections policies and procedures. Their efforts were successful; Act 119 was signed into Vermont law in May 2022 and will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

- Act 119 sets forth standards for financial assistance policies, specifies the steps the facilities must take to publicize and notify patients about their policies, and prohibits the facilities from selling their medical debt. The act also requires hospitals to submit a plain language summary of their financial assistance policies to the Green Mountain Care Board as part of the hospital fiscal year 2025 hospital budget review process.
  - There is a potential for unintended consequences to this law, in that some organizations with relatively generous assistance may decrease their contributions, while others increase.
  - Healthcare providers may have limited understanding of the impact of medical debt on patient care, and attention to this issue may increase awareness.
- The HCA is currently working with hospitals across Vermont to come into compliance with the new law.

This project may appeal to students interested in advocacy and legislation, plain language communication of health information, or health insurance status and ability to pay for healthcare as a critical social driver of health. This project is likely to include hospital visits, as well as interviews with hospital staff who are working to bring their facility into compliance with Act 119. While some parts of the project could be completed remotely, at least some project team members should plan to be available for in-person visits to facilities.

#### **Potential questions or goals for 2024**

- Hospitals are required to publish their policy and application materials in specific areas within the hospital, as well as throughout the community. How are hospitals meeting the new educational and outreach requirements in Act 119?
- Act 119 sets minimum standards for financial assistance. How might this impact decision making for organizations that were already exceeding those minimum standards?

### **5. LGBTQIA+ Culturally Responsive Dental Practice (UVM AHEC)**

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**Faculty:** Kathy Mariani, MD MPH (Family Medicine); **Collaborators:** American Institute of Dental Public Health

#### **Background**

- The American Institute of Dental Public Health (AIDPH) is committed to providing evidence-based oral health practices to dental and medical professionals with an emphasis on dental public health. Their programs promote health equity as a cornerstone of oral health education and training.
- Recently, AIDPH surveyed oral health professionals around LGBTQIA+ issues within dental primary care practice. They have also published the [LGBTQIA+ Cultural Responsiveness for Oral Health Providers Workbook](#), a comprehensive guide designed to bridge knowledge gaps and foster a deeper understanding of LGBTQIA+ patients in dental care.
- Despite these efforts, we don't know the extent to which the guidelines have been adopted by the Vermont Dental community.

This project may appeal to students interested in health equity, public health initiatives, health education and efforts to make patient care more welcoming and inclusive. While some parts of the project could be completed remotely, at least some project team members should plan to be available for in-person visits to dental practices.

#### **Potential questions or goals for 2024**

- Through outreach to dental practices, assess knowledge, attitudes and skills related to LGBTQ+ inclusive oral health best practices.
- Have the AIDPH guidelines been adopted by the Vermont Dental community?
- How open is the Vermont dental community to receiving oral health education and training on this topic?

## **6. Blueprint for Health Community Health Team Expansion in SVTAHEC Region (SVT AHEC Project)**

**Faculty:** Thomasena Coates, MPH, CPHQ, PCMH CCE, QI Practice Facilitator (Blueprint for Health); Susan White, Director of Health Careers Preparation & Practitioner Support (Southern VT AHEC) **Collaborators:** Maureen Boardman, MD, Director of Clinical Research (Little Rivers Health Center); Thomas Dougherty, MPH, Director of Quality and Community Health (North Star Health)

### Background

- The Vermont Blueprint for Health is a statewide Patient-Centered Medical Home program that was established in 2003. The Blueprint provides quality improvement facilitators for each of the 14 service areas in the state as well as Community Health Teams (CHT), which include case managers and social workers. [Home Page | Blueprint for Health \(vermont.gov\)](#)
- In the summer of 2023, the State of Vermont approved a 2-year pilot program, designed and managed by the Vermont Blueprint for Health, titled Community Health Team (CHT) Expansion. The CHT Expansion program provides funding for additional staff - Community Health Workers (CHWs) or licensed behavioral health professionals - to expand Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) sites' capacity to implement effective screening programs.
- The program requires universal, evidence-based screening for risks and needs related to mental health, substance use and social determinants of health (SDOH). Blueprint QI Practice Facilitators are working directly with practice sites to design and implement screening and navigation workflows.
- This project will be focused on the Southern Vermont AHEC region, where Thomasena Coates is the Blueprint facilitator for two health services areas. Two health care organizations in this region, each with multiple clinical sites, will be working on QI initiatives related to the CHT Expansion.

This project may appeal to students with an interest in SDOH screening, behavioral health integration, rural health, or primary care. Students working on this project can expect to strengthen their skills by working with highly experienced QI professionals on an on-going quality improvement initiative. Although project meetings will likely be held remotely, students should be open to on-site visits to the Southern Vermont practices. A literature review may also be included in this project.

### **Project specific objectives, questions, or goals for 2024**

- Apply skills in improvement science within a primary care setting in rural Vermont to support implementation of new/revised workflows related to screening and response by PCMH sites.
- Collaborate with medical home teams, including integrated behavioral health staff, to identify and address at least one root cause that is inhibiting administration of screens or successful navigation to services by the CHW(s) and/or a site's Clinical Care Coordinator.



## Summer 2024 Education/Mentoring Track

### 1. The Governor's Institutes of Vermont Institute on Health & Medicine SOUTH -- Day and Night Mentors

Faculty, Staff and Community Collaborators: Southern Vermont AHEC, led by Jennifer Scott

#### Project Dates

- Virtual orientation and pre-clinical learning component: **Monday, June 24 to Thursday June 27** from 11 AM to 3 PM (Monday required)
- Residential Institute:  
Required On-site staff training date **Sat, July 13**.  
Institute Dates: **Sun, July 14 to Sat, July 20, 2024** (Vermont State University Castleton Campus)
- Additional pre-program remote planning sessions begin in June (dates/time set by mutual agreement)

#### Expectations for in-person/virtual field work

Institute on Health & Medicine is an 8-day in-person commitment in July (plus the 4 days of virtual orientation and pre-clinical learning in June). Mentors commit to attending the session in full and on-site. Meals and lodging will be provided, along with reimbursement for approved mileage expenses to/from the site.

**Day Mentors** will be responsible for designing, leading, and assisting with programming for the 70 students primarily during the 7am-6pm shift while the institute is in session.

**Night Mentors** will be responsible for designing, leading, and assisting with programming for the 70 students primarily during the 5pm-9am shift while the institute is in session. Night mentors provide programming until "lights out" (approximately 10pm). Night mentors are expected to sleep on shift but must ensure overnight safety and chaperone protocols are met.

#### Background:

- **The Institute on Health & Medicine** is a 7-day, 6-night residential science enrichment and career exploration program for high school students.
- Mentors are program staff and will help with all aspects of the programming during their shift (including assisting with programming, facilitating community building, and communication). Additionally, Mentors will have the flexibility to create their own active and hands-on learning modules for students. Activities will be centered around a Lifestyle Medicine theme. Mentors will be asked to create programming/content that connects to Lifestyle Medicine.
- Mentors will be working with minors. A criminal background check and completion of a no-cost online mandated reporter training through the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families are required.
- Mentors can earn first aid certifications and qualify for certification as a **Vermont EMS First Responder (VEFR)**. If you are interested in exploring VEFR certification, AHEC staff will assist you with meeting the additional requirements.

#### Project specific goals

Aligned with national health science standards and state education quality standards, the goals of GIV Health & Medicine Institute, in partnership with Southern Vermont AHEC, are to increase participants' knowledge, skills, and abilities in the following areas: health careers, teamwork, patient care, health equity & inclusion, and self-awareness.

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

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Faculty, Staff and Community Collaborators: Northern Vermont AHEC, led by Nicole LaPointe

### Project Dates

- Virtual orientation and pre-clinical learning component:  
**Monday, June 24 to Thursday June 27** from 11 AM to 3 PM (Monday required)
- Residential Institute Dates:  
Required On-site staff training date: **Sat, July 6.**  
Institute Dates: **Sun, July 7 to Sat, July 13, 2024** (Vermont State University Lyndon Campus)
- Additional pre-program remote planning sessions begin in June (dates/time set by mutual agreement)

### Expectations for In-Person/Virtual Field Work

[Institute on Health & Medicine](#), is an 8-day in-person commitment in July (plus the 4 days of virtual orientation and pre-clinical learning in June). Mentors commit to attending the session in full and residing at Vermont State University, Lyndon campus. Meals and lodging will be provided.

**Day Mentors** will be responsible for designing, leading and assisting with programming for 70 high school students primarily between the hours of 7 am - 6 pm while the institute is in session.

### Background:

- **The Institute on Health & Medicine** is a 7-day, 6-night residential science enrichment and career exploration program for high school students.
- Mentors are program staff and will help with all aspects of the programming during the day (including leading programming, facilitating community building and communication). Additionally, Mentors will create their own active and hands-on learning modules for students, called Mentor Passion Sessions, inspired by the topics in health and medicine that ignite their passion. Northern Vermont AHEC staff will work with medical students to develop their ideas into interactive workshops.
- Mentors will be working with minors. A criminal background check and completion of a no-cost online mandated reporter training through the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families are required.
- Mentors will have the opportunity to earn first aid certifications and qualify for certification as a **Vermont EMS First Responder (VEFR)**. If you are interested in exploring VEFR certification, AHEC staff will assist you with meeting the additional requirements.

### Project Specific Goals

Aligned with national health science standards and state education quality standards, the goals of GIV Health & Medicine Institute, in partnership with Northern Vermont AHEC, are to increase participants' knowledge, skills, and abilities in the following areas: health careers, teamwork, patient care, professionalism, communication, and self-awareness.

### 3. HERO Mentoring SIG summer project (NVT AHEC)

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Faculty, Staff, and Community Collaborators: Northern Vermont AHEC, led by Nicole LaPointe

#### Project Dates

- Virtual orientation and project planning session in June (dates/time set by mutual agreement).
- Independent project activity (40 hours) spanning June 26 through August 9, 2024 including regular virtual check-ins with Northern Vermont AHEC staff.

#### Expectations for Field Work

The [HERO Mentoring Program](#) is a four-month one-to-one online mentoring program that pairs high school students with volunteer medical students trained in mentoring and STEM education. The HERO Mentoring Program is open to 9th through 12th graders residing in Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Orleans, Orange, Washington, and Chittenden Counties. There is no cost for participants.

Participants engage with their mentors in 10 learning modules: one focused on health career exploration, one focused on goal setting, and eight modules focused on human biology, health science, and medicine. These weekly sessions are scheduled by mentors from October to January. The goal of the program is to support science achievement and postsecondary pathway planning for Vermont teens.

Any class of 2027 member of the HERO SIG can apply for the summer project. Up to 4 students will be selected and preference will be given to students who have been active in a leadership role.

#### HERO Mentoring SIG Summer Project Aims:

- To implement changes to the 2024-2025 program's lesson plans and activities calendar based on student evaluation outcomes and former mentors' feedback.
- To identify opportunities for improving and augmenting training content.
- To align the HERO Mentoring Program with the timeline and expectations of the 80-hour AHEC Scholars fall pathway.
- To explore the feasibility of a longitudinal mentoring opportunity for HERO Mentoring Program alumni.

### 4. Med Mentors Mentoring SIG Summer Project (UVM AHEC)

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Faculty, Staff, and Community Collaborators: Charles MacLean, MD and Patti Smith Urie, UVM AHEC

#### Project Dates

- Virtual orientation and project planning session in June (dates/time set by mutual agreement).
- Independent project activity (40 hours) spanning June 26 through August 9, 2024 including regular virtual meetings scheduled by the project team.

#### Expectations for Field Work

The Med Mentors SIG at LCOM experienced significant growth and expansion over the 2023-24 academic year. Med Mentors leaders and mentors identified additional new activities for implementation in the 2024-25 academic year. Along with consideration of new activities, the summer project will be focused on implementing an evaluation component and identifying program improvements from feedback collected from previous mentors and mentees. The project team may research other medical school mentoring programs, and may work on coordination of efforts with LCOM Admissions, LCOM pre-health advising, UVM PEP program, VT AHEC Network staff, or other groups or organizations. The team will work with the identified Med Mentors student leaders and HERO team to plan a coordinated launch of both programs in the fall.

Any class of 2027 member of the Med Mentors SIG can apply for the summer project. Up to 4 students will be selected and preference will be given to students who have been active in a leadership role.

**Med Mentors Mentoring SIG Summer Project Aims:**

- To review program feedback and plan program improvements.
- To identify opportunities for collaboration with other entities to further common goals.
- To align the Med Mentors Mentoring Program with the timeline and expectations of the 80-hour AHEC Scholars fall pathway.

**Questions?**

Please contact Patti Smith Urie at [patti.smith-urie@uvm.edu](mailto:patti.smith-urie@uvm.edu) with questions related to the AHEC Network Summer Projects or application process.

Patti is also the contact for the Vermont AHEC Scholars program. Reach out to Patti with questions related to your AHEC transcript or progress toward completing the AHEC Scholars program.