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A Message from the Centers

There is no getting around it. The COVID-19 pandemic made 2020-2021 one of the most challenging years in the history of Idaho. Our healthcare workforce experienced unimaginable hardships - working in treacherous circumstances to save the lives of thousands and eking out, where possible, small consolations and hopes for brighter tomorrows. Our rural and underserved populations wrestled with newly forming health disparities while doing their best to protect their families and communities.

In this report, we provide examples of how we worked diligently in the past year to recruit and retain health professionals in the places they are needed most – with or without a raging pandemic. Our efforts started with pipeline programs that motivated high school students to become the next generation of health professionals. They continued through our AHEC Scholars program, which offered didactic and experiential opportunities to health professions college students from more than 17 disciplines. They moved on to continuing education offerings that instigated momentum and passion for existing health professionals.

We hope that our work reflects our gratitude and that it has, in some small way, offered inspiration, respite, and optimism. We look forward to the coming year, where we can continue to support Idaho’s public health and healthcare systems, champion our healthcare workforce, and support programs that bring about health equity.
The Idaho AHEC Team

Diana Schow, Ph.D., MHE, MA
Southeast Idaho AHEC Executive Director
Idaho State University Kasiska Division of Health Sciences
Institute of Rural Health
dianaschow@isu.edu

Rylee O’Neill, MPA
Southeast AHEC Program Director
Idaho State University Kasiska
Division of Health Sciences
Institute of Rural Health
ryleeoneill@isu.edu

Katrina Hoff
Southwest Idaho AHEC Director
Jannus Inc.
khoff@jannus.org

Liz Bryant, MS
North Idaho AHEC Director
University of Idaho
WWAMI Medical Education Program
Office of Underserved and Rural Medical Research
ebryant@uidaho.edu
The AHEC (Area Health Education Center) program was developed by Congress in 1971 to recruit, train and retain a health professions workforce committed to serving underserved populations. The AHEC program helps bring the resources of academic medicine to address local community health needs. The strength of the AHEC Network is its ability to creatively adapt national initiatives to help address local and regional healthcare issues.

The purpose of the AHEC program is to meet the needs of the communities they serve through robust community-academic partnerships, with a focus on exposure, education, and training of the current and future health care workforce, such as the development of an AHEC Scholars program. AHECs have a continual focus on improving the health care system by working with academic institutions, health care settings (including CHCs), behavioral health practices, and community-based organizations. Through these longstanding partnerships, AHECs employ traditional and innovative approaches to develop and train a diverse health care workforce prepared to deliver culturally appropriate, high-quality, team-based care, with an emphasis on primary care for rural and underserved communities.

-National AHEC Organization, nationalahec.org
The WWAMI Area Health Education Center (AHEC) program, in the University of Washington School of Medicine’s Office of Rural Programs, works to improve the diversity, distribution, and quality of the healthcare workforce in Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho. The WWAMI program office oversees the Washington and Idaho AHEC centers. The AHECs have locally representative boards of directors or advisory committees, and each Program Office has a regionally representative Advisory Board.

Southwest Idaho AHEC, formerly Idaho AHEC, has been enhancing Idaho's healthcare workforce and community health for 34 years. It is a program of Jannus, Inc., a multi-service non-profit organization located in Boise.

In September 2017, two new AHECs were established, greatly expanding AHEC's reach in Idaho and the West.

Southeast Idaho AHEC was developed in partnership with Idaho State University's Kasiska Division of Health Sciences and Institute of Rural Health.

North Idaho AHEC was developed in partnership with the University of Idaho's WWAMI Medical Education Program.

Idaho AHECs are affiliated with the University of Washington's WWAMI AHEC Program and are part of a nationwide system created to improve the distribution, diversity, and supply of the primary healthcare workforce, especially in rural and underserved areas.
Idaho AHEC Service Areas Align with Idaho's Public Health Districts

North Idaho AHEC
10 counties
Districts 1 and 2

Southwest Idaho AHEC
10 counties
Districts 3 and 4

Southeast Idaho AHEC
24 counties
Districts 5, 6, and 7
Idaho AHECs Support a Pathway to a Strong Health Workforce

Connecting Students to Careers...
Introducing high school students to health career pathways, and health profession students to team-based practice, with an emphasis on rural and underserved communities

...Professionals to Communities...
Preparing students from clinical, behavioral, and public health professions to work collaboratively in rural and underserved communities

...And Communities to Better Health
Delivering relevant continuing education opportunities, fostering strategic partnerships, and supporting health workforce initiatives
Through creative collaborations and partnerships with schools, clinics, hospitals, and other community stakeholders, Idaho AHECs deliver programs to build the interest, excitement, knowledge, and confidence to pursue careers in health care.

**ORIENTATION TO HEALTH CAREERS**

**SW ID AHEC, St. Luke’s and Mountain Home High School**

partnered to deliver a week-long program of health career pathway resources, health professional presentations, and a hands-on medical activity.

**SCRUBS CAMP - N ID AHEC**

In partnership with **Upward Bound at U of I**, N ID AHEC hosted a virtual Scrubs Camp where participants learned about health career pathways through interactive presentations led by an Intensive Care Unit RN.

**UPWARD BOUND SATURDAY SEMINAR**

**SE ID AHEC** offered a virtual "Saturday Seminar."

Students from rural and underserved communities learned about health careers and educational pathways in Idaho.

**SCRUBS CAMP - SE ID AHEC**

TRIO Upward Bound students at ISU attended a virtual Scrubs Camp filled with fun demonstrations, like compounding chapstick, with a pharmacist, an RN, and a public health professional.

87 Students Reached
Southeast Idaho AHEC & the Interprofessional Health Disciplines Student Association presented a virtual screening of the movie *Cured*, a film that chronicles the strategy and tactics that led to a crucial turning point in the movement for LGBTQ rights. A Q&A session led by Dr. Saul Levin of the American Psychiatric Association followed. Attendees included ISU students of all levels, providers, and WWAMI AHEC Scholars.

North Idaho AHEC coordinated professional development activities for pre-med students, including the 2021 Inland Northwest Pre-Med Summit, a virtual conference for undergraduate students and HS seniors, featuring five regional medical schools and the Idaho Pre-Med Mentoring Program, a near-peer mentoring program with a focus on supporting Idaho pre-med students from underrepresented and/or disadvantaged backgrounds.

**North Idaho AHEC's** *Vaccination as a Team Sport* virtual training by Dr. Carolyn Bridges of the Governor’s Coronavirus Working Group, and in-person *COVID-19 Vaccination Training*, helped prepare a multidisciplinary group of health profession students to support their communities through a team-based approach.
Service Learning (40 hours per year)
Clinical, experiential, or community service in an interdisciplinary environment in a rural or underserved community applies the six core topics.

Professional Development
Field trips, networking events, community projects, and specialized speakers offer more learning opportunities related to the six core topics.

AHEC SCHOLARS IS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPERIENCE!

Nursing
Physician Assistant
MD/DO
Pharmacy
Behavioral Health
Dietetics
Public Health
Dental Hygiene
Occupational Therapy
Physical Therapy
Radiographic Science
Speech/Language Pathology
Respiratory Therapy
more...
AHEC Scholars
Six Core Topics

INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION
supports a coordinated, patient-centered model of health care that involves an understanding of the contributions of multiple health 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 substances abuse conditions.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH
includes five key areas (determinants) of economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, neighborhoods and built environments, and their impact on health.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY
seeks to improve individual health and build 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 support quality improvement and patient-centered care through goal-setting, leadership, facilitation, workflow advancements, measuring outcomes, adapting organizational tools and processes to support team-based models of care delivery.

CURRENT & EMERGING HEALTH ISSUES
supports an understanding of and appropriate response to issues that affect specific geographic or demographic populations, such as COVID-19, opioid abuse, adverse and geographically relevant health issues.
AHEC Scholar Evaluations

Here we present findings from Idaho AHEC Scholar 2020-2021 applications, pre-post tests, and service learning.

Success with Six!

After completion of didactic coursework, Scholars reported an increase in knowledge about the six core topics (6CT) and interprofessional (IPE) collaboration.

![Graph showing increased scores in 6CT and IPE]

All measures are statistically significant at p<.05 pre- and post- curriculum completion.

Idaho AHEC Scholars were trained During 2020-2021

88

Idaho AHEC Scholars were trained During 2020-2021

$38,000

In Stipends Awarded to Idaho AHEC Scholars

SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCES

“I left for Spring Break and returned to a world of Covid Chaos. As a medical student, I felt the need to help in any possible capacity. While being in a clinical setting was unsafe, I sought to be involved with my community… I was exposed to our hospital team as they developed surge protocol and was enlightened to the vulnerability of our limited capacity. In addition, I collaborated on a community project to pool resources and organize volunteers in a safe way to help support the needs and mental health of [my county] during this strange time.” (North Idaho AHEC Scholar)

WHERE SCHOLARS PLAN TO WORK

- Medically Underserved Community: 79%
- Primary Care: 45%
- Rural Community: 52%
Rural and Underserved Community-Based Training

Idaho AHECs support community-based experiential training in rural and underserved areas through field placements and clinical rotations for health professions students.*

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<th>Disciplines of Students Supported</th>
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<td>Medical (MD/DO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Lab Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing (BSN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiologic Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physician Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupational/Physical Therapy</td>
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$40,585 awarded in participant support for travel, housing and other needs

53 health professions students supported with stipends in Summer 2021

"I think that you get to have a broader scope of practice ... in a rural setting. My impression is that you can also find your niche and set a lifestyle fitting to you in rural medicine."
(Idaho WWAMI Medical Student)

*Data represents North Idaho AHEC’s support of the Idaho WWAMI Rural Underserved Opportunities Program (RUOP), Southwest Idaho AHEC’s Rural Student Support Program and Southeast Idaho AHEC’s nursing clinical rotation support.
Continuing Education

2020-2021 Came with Great Strides!

Idaho AHECs meet education and training needs of our state's healthcare workforce, especially those living and working in frontier, rural, and/or urban-underserved communities.

"...learned how important oral health is for overall health in patients." (participant, Integrating Oral Health)

"Cadaver lab was hugely useful... loved that there [were] multidisciplinary attendees..." (participant, Advanced Foot & Ankle Course)

Health Disciplines that Benefitted from Idaho AHEC Continuing Education Opportunities

- **Nursing (NP/RN/LPN)**: 28.9%
- **Physician Assistant**: 6.6%
- **Dental Health (Dentists, RDHs, DAs)**: 14.5%
- **Physicians (MD/DO)**: 5.3%
- **Speech Language Pathology**: 3.9%
- **Dietetics**: 3.9%
- **Other (CMA, CHES, CHW)**: 9.2%
- **Pharmacy**: 1.3%
- **PT, OT, AT**: 19.7%
- **Behavioral Health**: 6.6%
- **Physicians (MD/DO)**: 5.3%

"Cadaver lab was hugely useful... loved that there [were] multidisciplinary attendees..." (participant, Advanced Foot & Ankle Course)
Continuing Education Offerings (2020-2021)

Healing the Healer: Addressing the Biological Underpinnings of Chronic Stress through Mind-Body Medicine

This two-part series provided twenty-nine (29) attendees strategies to heal their mind, body, spirit, and community through increased awareness of the effects of chronic stress on the body, skills to combat the strain of providing care during times of crisis, and knowledge of how to incorporate mind-body medicine into patient appointments.

Integrating Oral Health Care Into Medical Practice

This training provided twenty-nine (29) attendees a unique opportunity to develop their knowledge of the history and practice of prevention in dental care, the relationship between oral health and overall health (including behavioral health), applying oral health risk assessment protocol in practice and integrating basic oral health practices into existing medical practices.

Advanced Foot & Ankle Course

During this three-day interprofessional seminar, fifteen (15) attendees learned advanced management strategies for diagnosing and evaluating common foot and ankle pathologies, orthotic management and footwear, manual therapy techniques, and therapeutic exercise.

Speak My Culture

This training provided thirty (30) participants evidence-based tools to understand Latinx cultural values, use of traditional healers and medicines, beliefs, and practices associated with healthcare.

Our CE offerings provide Continuing Education credits for participants, including* AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™, ACCME, ACPE, and ANCC. Participants may also directly apply for CE credits through their professional licensing bodies.

*Accreditation status varies by Center
We Thrive on Partnership!

Idaho AHECs build lasting partnerships with local, regional, statewide, and national organizations.

Pipeline Events

We collaborated on high school outreach with partners such as the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, TRIO/Upward Bound, and St. Luke’s.

AHEC Scholars

AHEC Scholars Completed Community/Experiential/Clinical Training Hours at 78 Idaho Locations.

Scholars Attending Southwest Idaho AHEC’s Interprofessional Conference on Opioid Education

Continuing Education

Idaho AHECs partnered to deliver quality training for health professionals with the Idaho Oral Health Alliance, University of Idaho WWAMI Office of Continuing Education, Idaho State University College of Pharmacy and others.

Community-based Training

Our many rural and underserved training sites include community health centers, critical access hospitals, and rural health centers across Idaho.

Idaho Area Health Education Centers Annual Report 2020-2021
Champion Idaho!

Idaho has incredible opportunities for students and health professionals to learn, grow and recommit to their passion!

"I was able to interact with patients and get a better sense of the types of issues that [they] were dealing with and the process for billing at a free clinic. I was able to work with an RN and a dental hygienist in addition to several support staff members while at the clinic. (Southwest Idaho AHEC Scholar)"

In the Coming Year Idaho AHECs Commit to:

1. **Expanding:**
   
   We will apply for an Idaho Program Office to be housed at the School of Nursing at Idaho State University.

2. **Connecting:**
   
   We will develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to better serve the state.

3. **Learning:**
   
   We will conduct research and evaluation to ensure our programs meet workforce needs and address emergent issues in rural and underserved communities.
All AHECs are required by statute to convene Advisory Boards to provide guidance and regular feedback to the Center Directors about goals, activities, and operations at least three times a year. This group represents health profession, academic programs, public health, state entities, scholars, and other community stakeholders.

We know it takes a village, and we are oh so grateful to our Advisory Board members for their collective years of voluntary service!

**SOUTHWEST IDAHO AHEC**

Angie Bailey, RDH-EA, MSDH, Vice Chair, Idaho Department of Health & Welfare  
Gina Pannell, Member, Central District Health  
Gus Koch, Member, Medical Student, University of Washington  
Laura Alvarez, LPC, Member, Mental Health Therapist  
Lutana Haan, EdD, RRT, Member, Boise State University  
Mary Barinaga, MD, Chair, University of Washington  
Mary Sheridan, RN, MBA, Member, Idaho Department of Health & Welfare  
Megan Fessenden, Member, Medical Student, Idaho College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Patricia Z Marincic, PhD, RDN, CLE, Member, Idaho State University - Meridian  
Robin Donovan, Member, Idaho Primary Care Association  
Stephanie Mai, Member, Idaho Career & Technical Education  
Suzanne Allen, M.D., Member, University of Washington  
Ted Epperly, MD, Member, Family Medicine Residency of Idaho

**NORTH IDAHO AHEC**

Kayla Sprenger, MHA, Board Chair, Public Health - Idaho North Central District  
Cody Wilkinson, MHA, Member, Clearwater Valley Health and St. Mary’s Health  
Helen Brown, RD, MPH, Member, University of Idaho  
Dr. Jacob Hornby, PhD, Member, Lewis-Clark State College  
Dr. Jonathan Shupe, MD, Member, Kootenai Family Medicine Coeur d’ Alene Residency  
Dr. Joyce Lyons, PhD, Member, Rural Crisis Response Project, Region 2  
Julie Stafford, Member, Moscow High School  
Rhegan McGregor, MS2, Member, University of Washington School of Medicine  
Dr. Rula Awwad-Rafferty, PhD, Member, University of Idaho
IDAHO AHEC ADVISORY BOARDS

Jesse Tellez, Southeast Idaho AHEC Advisory Board Member and AHEC Scholars Ben Reeves and Darcey Carr

SOUTHEAST IDAHO AHEC

Aaron Houston, Chair, Family Health Services
Arnold Cantu, Vice-Chair, Community Family Clinic
Dr. Chris Owens, PharmD, MPH, Idaho State University Kasiska Division of Health Sciences
Dr. Frank Batcha, Jr., MD, Idaho WWAMI
Jesse Tellez, NP, Shoshone Bannock Community Health Center
Dr. John McCarthy, MD, University of Washington School of Medicine Office of Rural Programs
John Williams, Nell J. Redfield Memorial Hospital
Lachelle Smith, ECHO Idaho
Maggie Mann, Southeastern Idaho Public Health
Maya Tillotson, Idaho State University, Masters of Health Care Administration
Michael Blauer, Bear Lake Memorial Hospital
Robert Chambers, Butte Middle/High School
Stephanie Roberts, PA-C, Shoshone Family Medical Center
Dr. Karen Neil, Ph.D., RN, Idaho State University, Kasiska Division of Health Sciences
Brad Huerta, Lost River Medical Center
Stacey Morrison, University of Washington School of Medicine Office of Rural Programs
Idaho AHEC Partners

We would like to express our sincere, heartfelt gratitude to our many academic, state, regional, and national partners. We could not do this important work without each and every one of you!

Thank You!

Want to learn more about our programs and/or explore potential partnerships? We would love to hear from you!

N ID AHEC
Liz Bryant
ebryant@uidaho.edu

SE ID AHEC
Diana Schow
dianaschow@isu.edu
Rylee O'Neill
ryleeoneill@isu.edu

SW ID AHEC
Katrina Hoff
khoff@jannus.org

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