

# WESTERN MT AHEC



**2020-2021**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

# WESTERN MONTANA AHEC

The Western MT AHEC, at the University of Montana, in Missoula, was established in 2008. WMT-AHEC is affiliated with the College of Health at the University of Montana-Missoula and is located at the Missoula College Campus. WMT-AHEC is closely affiliated with the 13 health professions programs offered through the University of Montana Health & Medicine (UMHM) programs. WMT-AHEC serves the following Western counties: Flathead, Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Sanders, and Ravalli.

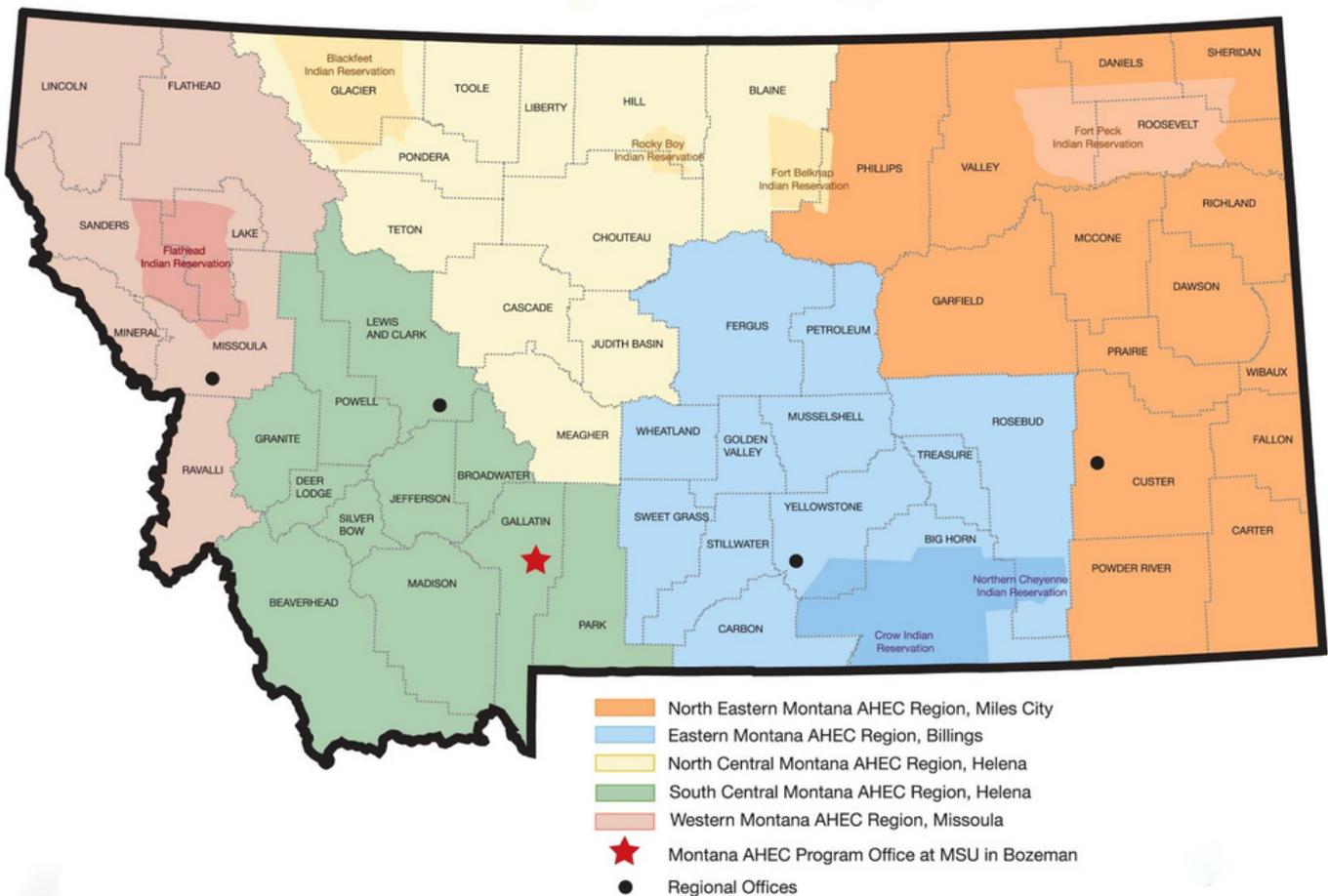
## MISSION

The AHEC Mission is to enhance access to quality healthcare, particularly primary and preventative care, by improving the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals via strategic partnership with academic programs, communities, and professional organizations.

## GOAL

A diverse, culturally competent primary care/healthcare workforce representative of Montana communities, that is prepared to deliver high quality care in a transforming system and is distributed throughout the state, particularly in rural and underserved areas and populations.

## Montana AHEC Regions



# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am excited to connect with you all after serving as the Western Montana AHEC Director since July 2021. Although I know some of you from various contexts over the years, I would like to introduce myself to those I have not yet met. I am a family physician and currently serve as the Associate Program Director of the Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana. Prior to joining the faculty at the residency program and the clinical team at Partnership Health Center in 2015, I worked at the Southwest Montana Community Health Center in Butte. I am a proud alumna of the National Health Service Corps, which shares a mission in alignment with the principles of AHEC. My heart has been in the world of community health centers, care of underserved and rural populations, medical education, and health professional workforce development since my own years in training. Thus, I jumped at the opportunity to join the team at Western Montana AHEC to contribute more broadly to health professional workforce development across our region.

I am sure your professional lives have been defined by constant shifting ground over these past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. We too have experienced various changes at the Western Montana AHEC office, and yet the team has continued to work tirelessly to advocate for students and for our local communities' workforce needs. I cannot speak highly enough of the dedication and innovation of our staff across their various realms and appreciate all the wonderful updates we are able to share based on their hard work over the past year.

Our Western Montana AHEC team remains busy and committed to supporting health professions training in our region - from K-12 students, to health professional students in-training, to the interprofessional healthcare heroes that work across our state to keep our communities healthy. We continue to strive and innovate to meet the new and evolving needs of our state in the service of all Montanans, including those with the greatest healthcare needs.

Thank you for your support and interest in our AHEC programs! Please read on for more updates from 2020-2021.

**Amy Matheny, MD, MPH, FAAFP**  
**WMT-AHEC Director**



# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

- University of Montana Health & Medicine
- Northcentral AHEC, Southcentral AHEC, Eastern AHEC, Northeastern AHEC, and AHEC Program Office
- St Luke Community Healthcare
- Providence St. Patrick Hospital and St. Joseph Medical Center
- Clark Fork Valley Hospital
- Community Medical Center
- Mineral Community Hospital
- Kalispell Regional Medical Center
- Montana Hospital Association
- Montana Primary Care Association
- Montana Family Medicine-Residency
- Montana Public Health Training Center
- Salish Kootenai College
- Flathead Valley Community College
- Missoula County Public Schools
- Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital
- Western Montana Clinic
- Cabinet Peaks Medical Center
- North Valley Hospital
- Partnership Healthcare Center
- Northwest Community Healthcare Center
- Montana Department of Labor & Industry
- Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana
- Headwaters Foundation
- Central Montana Medical Center
- Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

# WESTERN MONTANA AHEC TEAM



**Ilsa Seib,  
Director of  
Budgets and  
Personnel**



**Lily Apedaile,  
UMHM  
Director,  
Health Science  
Outreach**



**Liz Kelsey, WWAMI  
and Pre-Med Job  
Shadowing  
Manager**



**Mary Parrish,  
BHWET  
Program  
Manager**



**Robin Mochi,  
Continuing  
Education  
Coordinator**



**Katie Turner,  
UM Pre-Med  
Job Shadow  
Coordinator**



**Irene Schmid,  
AHEC Scholars  
Manager**

# STAFFING UPDATES

We have had various changes among our staff over the past few months. Many of you know Kaye Norris, Ph.D., who served as our interim director and also as director of the AHEC Scholars program for the state. Although bittersweet, we were excited to celebrate Kaye's career and retirement this past summer and wished her well on her move to Kansas to be closer to family. Her impact on our AHEC and the lives of so many health professions students will be missed and has been so appreciated.

We also have been fortunate to welcome some new team members over the past few months. In August, Mary Parrish, MS, joined our team as our BHWET (Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training) Program Manager and Behavioral Health Training Coordinator. Mary brings an excellent breadth of prior experience, including work with the Missoula City-County Health Department, adjunct faculty teaching in the School of Public and Community Health Sciences at UM, and HIV prevention work and research. She brings innovation, efficiency, and strong relationship-building to her role with BHWET and also with rolling out a new initiative of behavioral health training programs for health professionals in our region. We are lucky to have her on our team!

We have also just welcomed another new team member, Irene Schmid, BSN, MPH, who joined us in early December. Irene will serve as our AHEC Scholars Program Manager, which will also include work in collaboration with the Health Careers Opportunities Program as well as the Interprofessional Education Steering Committee at UM. Irene brings a depth of clinical and public health experience as well as community-based advocacy, including prior work on the Blackfeet Reservation and as a Community Services Program Director at the Seattle Indian Health Board. She brings a passion for health equity and social determinants of health, particularly in service to Indigenous communities. Irene's wealth of knowledge and commitment will serve the students and constituents of the AHEC Scholars program well and will help us to grow in our equity work.



# OUR PROGRAMS

## **BHWET**

Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program is a joint project between the University of Montana and Montana State University that seeks to place teams of graduate students in their final years in clinical rotations in rural primary care settings. The emphasis is to connect students with underserved populations who have little access to behavioral health services, while simultaneously training students in integrated behavioral health.

## **MedStart**

A week-long summer camp for high school students hosted at the University of Montana that focuses on healthcare degrees and careers.

## **REACH**

A ½ day-long camp for high school students that is hosted at a local hospital or on the University of Montana campus that engages students in hands-on healthcare-related activities.

## **Friday Medical Conference**

Friday Medical Conference (FMC) is a weekly Continuing Medical Education (CME) opportunity for physicians, healthcare professionals, and several healthcare student programs. This 'Grand Rounds' style lecture series provides a cross-section of recent advances in medicine along with clinical etiology, diagnosis, and management information.



# OUR PROGRAMS (CONT.)

## **Pain Conference**

The Montana Pain Conference utilizes an interdisciplinary approach, the conference focuses on sharing innovations in chronic pain care. With an emphasis on effective pain assessment, special attention is paid to research, education, and advocacy. Effective pain management aims to empower providers and patients as they navigate complex treatment needs.

## **WWAMI**

WWAMI is a cooperative program of the University of Washington School of Medicine and the states of Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho. It is a program which makes medical education accessible to students in the northwestern United States by decentralizing the educational process and by sharing existing facilities and personnel in universities and communities in the WWAMI states

## **Rural Clinical Rotations**

Supports health professions students participating in clinical rotations at rural and underserved sites in Montana. Students will receive travel reimbursement for personal car mileage. Clinical rotations must be at a Critical Access Hospital (CAH), a rural health clinic, a tribal health service, or a Community Health Center (CHC) in Montana.



# OUR PROGRAMS (CONT.)

## **Informational Interviews**

Video conference interviews with medical providers that are geared towards pre-med college students. In these interviews, the medical providers talk about their path to a career in medicine, answer student questions about attending medical school, and review a clinical case study with the students.

## **Rural Health Scholars Program**

A pilot collaboration with St. Luke Community Healthcare that involves a 3 week-long, paid job shadowing opportunity along with specialized ACT tutoring and career/college advising for students

## **Classroom Chats**

Classroom Chats is a program that connects healthcare professionals to 5-12th grade students across Montana and students at UM. The format is conversational, Q and A style so that the students feel they've had direct contact with healthcare professionals. The goal of this program is to help students gain a better understanding of the various careers in healthcare and what the day to day looks like for a healthcare professional. This program is especially meant for schools in remote, rural areas that do not have easy access to a healthcare facility and a way to interact with healthcare professionals.

# AHEC SCHOLARS BY THE NUMBERS

## Montana State University

Nursing (BSN)	156
Graduate Nursing (DNP)	25
Dietetics (MS)	5
Pre-Professional	2
Nutrition Sciences (BS)	2
Biological Sciences	1

## Gallatin College

Medical Assistant	2
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**( 273 Students )**

## University of Washington – Montana WWAMI

Medical Students (MD)	21
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## Carroll College

Social Work (MSW)	4
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## University of Montana

Athletic Training (MS)	16
Public Health (MPH)	7
Public Health (BA)	1
Clinical Psychology (PhD)	2
Counseling (MA)	2
Pharmacy (PharmD)	5
Physical Therapy (DPT)	21
Pre-Professional	2

# AHEC SCHOLARS

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### YEAR 1

#### 40 Clinical Hours

- Interprofessional, community-based experiential learning
- Clinical rotations
- Volunteer, hands-on experiences

#### 40 Educational Hours

- Elective educational training in the six core topic areas
- For-credit courses or self-paced

### YEAR 2

#### 40 Clinical Hours

- Interprofessional, community-based experiential learning
- Clinical rotations
- Volunteer, hands-on experiences

#### 40 Educational Hours

- Elective educational training in the six core topic areas
- For-credit courses or self-paced

## Certification

A nationally recognized certification that signifies that the students have additional knowledge, skills, and experiences. This will give them an advantage in moving forward in their chosen health profession.

## Benefits

- Learn to work effectively in a team-based setting
- Develop new skills, experiences, and strategies to improve both access and delivery of healthcare
- Have the chance to meet leaders in healthcare and interact with health care professionals creating an invaluable network for your future career
- Make connections with other participants
- Receive a certification, which will set you apart from other students in an increasingly competitive environment
- Receive recognition at graduation

# RURAL CLINICAL ROTATIONS

**8**

Students  
Supported

**6**

Clinical Rural Sites

**\$2,500**

Dollars in  
Donation

**3**

Different  
Health Professions

**\$2,113**

Dollars  
Disbursed

**7,043**

Miles Travelled



## WWAMI MISSOULA CLERKSHIPS/ ROTATIONS

**6**

Different training sites

**3**

New Teaching  
Faculty

**96**

Clerkships/  
Rotations/Electives

**1**

New Advanced  
Care Patient  
Rotation in  
Cardiology

**67**

Medical students  
participated

**21**

Medical students  
from a rural and/or  
underserved background

2021 Match Day for  
Missoula Track:

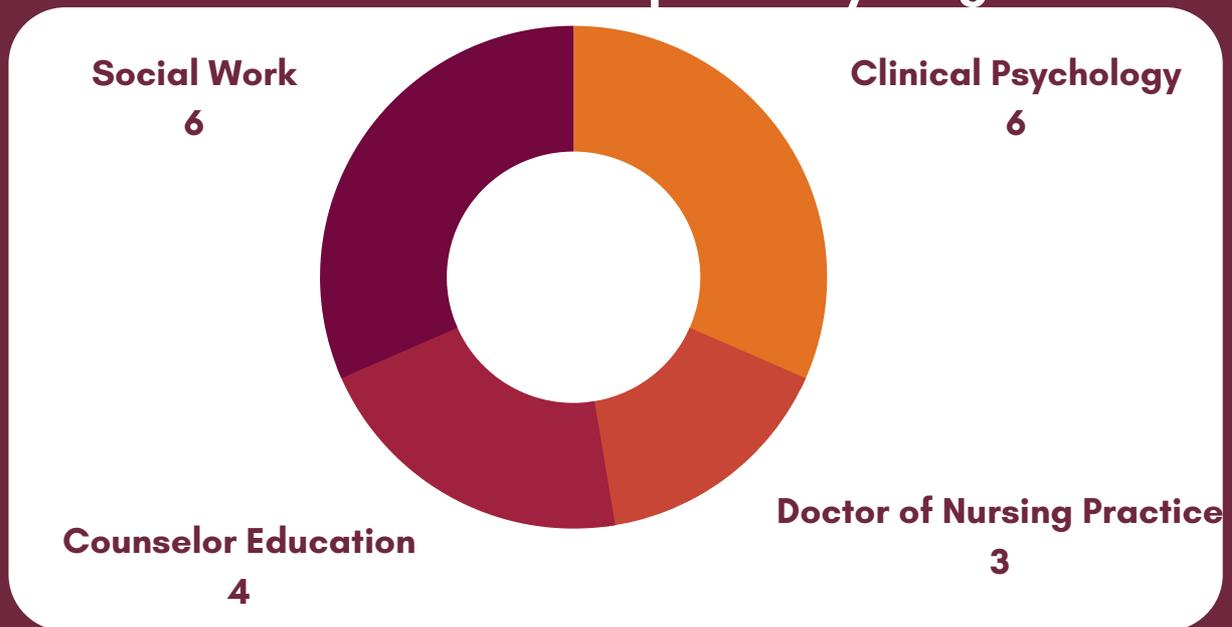
- 2--Internal Med
- 1--Family Med
- 1--Anesthesiology
- 1--Orthopedic Surgery

# BHWET Program

The HRSA-funded BHWET Program focuses on increasing the accessibility of quality behavioral health professionals and behavioral health sites across the state, especially in rural and frontier areas where community members only health care touchpoint might be at a primary care setting. The number of appointments and warm hand-offs between professionals, and the number of clients seen from rural areas, HRSA-defined Medically Underserved Communities (MUC), and hours spent in primary care settings are tracked and accounted for so that we can measure program reach and success.



## BHWET Student Participation by Program



**19** Students Participating

**10** Students from a rural and disadvantaged background

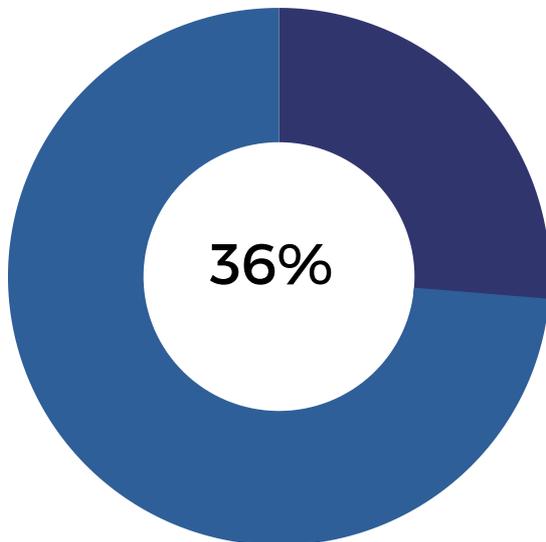
**16** Different integrated behavioral health settings as clinical training sites

**\$355,000** Stipend support provided to students

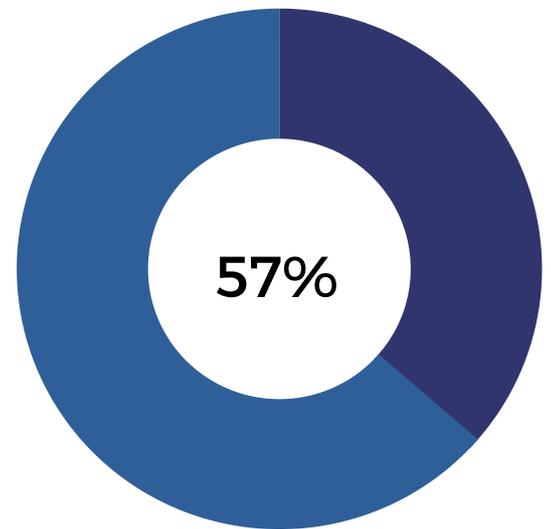
# Career Awareness Programs



42 In-Person/Virtual Program Participants



from a rural background



from a disadvantaged background



127 Hours of Structured Activities

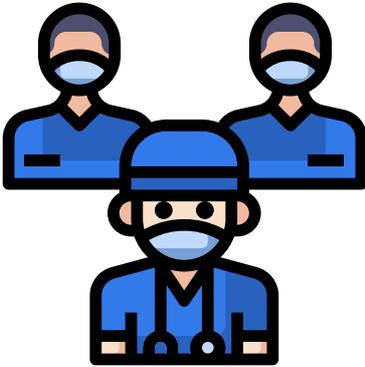
# Pre-Med/Pre-PA Job Shadowing

**21 Job  
Shadowing  
Experiences**

**21  
Informational  
Interviews**

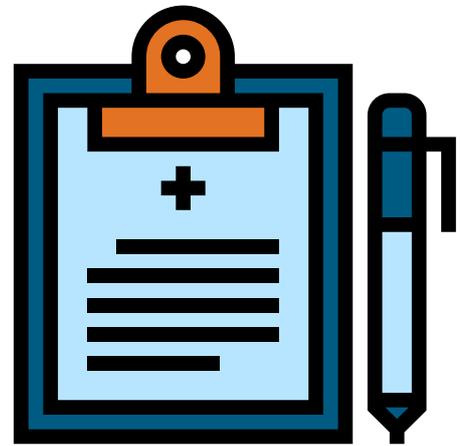
**220  
Informational  
Interview  
Participants**

# Continuing Education Programs



1,979 Participants

44.5 hours of training provided



Friday Medical Conference	COVID Update Series	Montana Pain Conference
1874 Participants	100 Participants	105 Participants
32 Hours of CME	87=Average Live Attendance 1000=Average Recorded Attendance	12.5 Hours of CME
9/2020-05/2021	10/2020-06/2021	10/2020

# Looking Ahead to 2021-2022

- **Responding to COVID-19**--We are anticipating a sub-award in early 2022 for a large CDC grant for which the Montana AHEC network is a significant participant. The “National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities Among Populations at High-Risk and Underserved, Including Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations and Rural Communities” will include efforts, focused on rural and underserved communities, to:
    - bolster the COVID health workforce, including a community health worker network, to support community education, prevention, disease mitigation, and elimination of barriers to health equity
    - support workforce training for COVID mitigation, vaccine counseling, social determinants of health, and data collection
    - develop Health Equity Leadership Councils across the state and provide technical assistance at the local level to support health equity work across the sector
  - **WWAMI**- Work with healthcare providers and facilities in Western Montana to continue providing clerkship opportunities during the pandemic. Also, expand elective offerings and integrate new faculty into the program.
  - **Pre-Med Job Shadow Program**- We were able to test out the use of the telepresence robot during a networking event at UM. We are looking forward to establishing the use of the telepresence robot for job shadowing with St. Luke Community Healthcare.
  - **Career Awareness:**
    - Return career awareness programs to pre-pandemic levels while still keeping virtual options
    - Partner with UM and Missoula College to offer new pathways for high school students to health profession degrees.
  - **BHWET-WMT-AHEC** and UM were awarded another four-year BHWET grant through HRSA. BHWET Cohort 5 consists of 18 students representing the same four disciplines (Counseling, Social Work, DNP, and Psychology) working at more than 14 different sites. The current grant cycle continues to focus on integrated behavioral health with a particular emphasis on serving children, adolescents, and transitional age youth. This means that BHWET students are placed not only at clinics and hospitals but also at schools and other settings that serve youth. To date, WMT/AHEC and UM have provided more than \$290,000 in stipend and scholarship support to Cohort 5. We’re looking forward to spending the spring with Cohort 5 and conducting recruitment for Cohort 6, which will continue the good, hard work of improving access to quality behavioral health services, while strategically shoring up youth mental health across Montana.
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Connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health.

