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The National AHEC Organization (NAO) represents a network of more than 300 AHEC program offices and centers that serve over 85% of United States counties. The NAO mission is to help its members achieve the AHEC mission through advocacy, education, and research. The AHEC mission is to enhance access to quality health care, particularly primary and preventive care, by improving the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals via strategic partnerships with academic programs, communities, and professional organizations.

AHECs Train, Recruit and Develop the Future Health Care Workforce

America's health care system is being challenged to make changes that will achieve the ambitious triple aim of better health, better care and lower costs. Area Health Education Center (AHEC) centers and programs based in diverse communities across the nation are actively responding to this challenge with services and programs that directly respond to the changing health care environment and address the needs of providers who increasingly struggle to adapt to these dramatic changes while maintaining a focus on providing high quality care. The National AHEC Organization and its network of AHEC centers and programs are well-prepared to do more.

AIMS

1. Meet the increasing demands for an adequate health care workforce; particularly in primary care.
2. Improve the distribution of health professions workforce particularly in rural and underserved areas.
3. Foster a diverse health professions workforce that reflects the nation's population.
4. Prepare health professionals to expand collaborative practice and team-based models of care.
5. Promote innovative care delivery models that achieve more efficient and effective patient-centered care, improve professional satisfaction and retention of providers, and improve workforce capacity and care quality.

Nationally, AHEC Centers and AHEC Programs:

- Effectively Link to and Support HRSA Programs
- Comprise Effective National Network
- Contribute to Inter-Professional Training
- Collaborate with over 1,000 Community Health Centers, and provide student rotations, shadowing experiences, mentoring, recruitment, resource and continuing education
- Increase Diversity by providing clinical experiences, cultural exposure and continuing education for health professions students and health providers who serve in medically underserved communities
- Increase Access to Health Care in Rural Areas by providing workforce data/projections for rural areas, and through community-based student education experiences and professional education and support for health providers
- Support Practice Transformation and New Models of Care by collaborating with academic institutions, payers and practices in quality improvement initiatives

In the State/District, AHECs are implementing programs that:

- Integrate public health & primary care while increasing placements of students in such community-based settings.
- Partner with local, state-wide, and national partners to maximize resources.
- Participate in efforts to increase access to and coverage by health insurance.
- Provide Interprofessional Education initiatives focusing on team-based care to continually improve the quality of care for increased patient safety, outcomes, and overall provider/patient experience across the health care system.

Detailed information by state can be found on the NAO website [\[www.nationalahec.org\]](http://www.nationalahec.org) and demonstrates how well AHECs respond to the health education needs of health professionals, students and community residents.

Diverse Workforce

In addition, AHEC's diverse workforce has an excellent track record of recruiting, mentoring and training students from underrepresented minority, rural and disadvantaged populations. AHEC's collaborations with National Health Service Corps, National Association of Medical Minority Educators, National Rural Health Association and many others, along with center locations in communities where providers, students and their families live, provide AHECs with the unique ability to understand their challenges. The people who work in AHECs are as diverse as the people we work with. AHECs are uniquely positioned to play a significant role in building a workforce that will collaborate in the healthcare system of the future. AHECs have the access, diversity, capability and capacity to help make this happen.

Funding the AHEC Program at \$40 million for FY18 will help make this future a reality