

AHEC Scholars Education & Mentoring 80-hour Pathway 2026-2027

Updated August, 2026

This AHEC Scholars eligible activity is offered by the UVM Office of Primary Care and AHEC Program, in partnership with Northern Vermont AHEC and the Larner HERO and MedMentors Student Interest Groups. To meet AHEC Scholars requirements, students must complete the full 80-hour program comprised of 40 didactic and 40 field hours. The overarching goal is to inspire and encourage young people from all backgrounds to pursue careers in the medical professions. The program offers Larner students opportunities to develop skills in structured near-peer mentoring and experiential learning, while also contributing to AHEC's strategic efforts to grow and sustain a strong health care workforce for all Vermonters. Program content relates to mentoring at all life stages – early exploration of an interest in health care, high school through medical education, and over a medical career. Learning sessions highlight the importance of interprofessional partnership and cross-sector collaboration in addressing complex health topics. Key AHEC Scholars priority areas: Interprofessional Education/ Interprofessional Practice; Behavioral Health Integration; Social Determinants of Health; and Cultural Competency.

Learning objectives: Through participation in this program, students will:

1. Apply strategies for effective mentoring in goal-focused group and one-on-one settings.
2. Recognize and reflect on the value of diverse perspectives in health care.
3. Discuss professionalism and best practices in culturally responsive mentorship and patient care.
4. Identify health care challenges, strengths, and opportunities in Vermont's rural and underserved populations, including community-driven solutions.
5. Explore the interrelatedness of education, careers and job availability, income level, and health care as key social determinants of health for individuals and communities.
6. Be able to articulate the importance of the national AHEC Scholar Priorities as they relate to quality and equity in healthcare.

The Education & Mentoring 80-hour program is an AHEC Scholars eligible activity

To meet requirements, full participation in the 40 didactic hours and at least 40 field hours must be completed within the same academic year (Sept – May). Students may complete during their first or second year at LCOM. Field hours are completed via structured mentoring activities in one of the LCOM mentoring SIGs - HERO SIG or MedMentors SIG.

An information session will be held on **Tuesday 8/18/26 | noon-1:00 | Med Ed 100**. SIG leaders and advisors will provide an overview of both mentoring programs and the 40 didactic hours, followed by question and answer. If you cannot attend, individual appointments or 'office hours' will be made available. We ask students to carefully review and understand the time commitment as you choose whether to apply.

AHEC Scholars Core Topic Areas

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

Topic	Emphasis or examples
Interprofessional Education/ Interprofessional Practice	- team-based care delivery, patient-centered care, effective teamwork
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	-economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, neighborhood and built environment
Cultural Competency	-recognize and address the unique culture and health literacy of consumers
Medical Practice Transformation	- quality improvement, care coordination, cost containment, rural health care, primary care, team-based care
Current and Emerging Health Issues	-current HRSA-approved topics: opioids and substance use disorders, oral health as part of overall health

The AHEC Scholars Program is part of AHEC's longitudinal workforce research about influences on specialty selection and future practice—location, type of practice, and the patient population served. AHEC Mentoring SIG activities further overall Office of Primary Care and AHEC program goals in early pipeline workforce development and health professions student engagement in AHEC core priority areas.

Learning Activities – 40 Didactic Hours and 40 Mentoring SIG Hours

Program activities examine the importance of formal and informal mentoring relationships across medical education and practice. We value and encourage opportunities to connect with others and build networks of support, for both mentors and mentees. Medical student mentors are also encouraged to develop their own goals and areas for growth. In addition to developing skills in structured near-peer mentoring, training activities focus on developing leadership skills, learning about interprofessional collaboration, understanding the strengths and challenges in health care for Vermont rural or underserved populations, and/or effective partnerships between medical professionals and community agencies.

Program activities require commitment to personal reflection and adhering to standards of professionalism. Regular 'check-ins' are planned to focus on balance in meeting obligations to self and others. Although full participation is expected, it is inevitable that some students may experience feelings of being overextended at points along the way. As medical students your primary focus is your medical studies. Should you find yourself not able to do both, this

extracurricular activity would be second. During these times, open communication is expected and AHEC is available to support you with problem solving and developing your plan of action.

Didactic Activities (40 Hours)

Students participate in a training curriculum titled led by UVM AHEC, with support from Northern Vermont AHEC. We provide a mix of asynchronous and synchronous learning activities combined with opportunities to discuss key themes with peers. Backup options are offered when scheduling conflicts arise. **Synchronous activities will be scheduled between September and January 2027; Asynchronous activities should be completed by April 2027.** Please note the following dates as required, in-person activities. You will also have the opportunity to choose which other AHEC spotlight sessions to attend.

AHEC Spotlight: Health Equity | Wednesday, Sept 2 noon-1:00 | MedEd 200 Classroom

This session with Taylor Small, UVMHC Director of Health Equity, offers an overview of current health equity topics at UVMHC and UVM Health, including health care access for rural and underserved Vermonters. Dr Anne Morris will discuss the connection between healthcare workforce development and the health equity topics explored in the AHEC Spotlight series.

AHEC Orientation to Mentoring | Friday, Sept 11 noon-1:00 | Med Ed 300 Reardon Classroom

Overview of mentoring in a health workforce development context, mentoring as a strategy for health workforce diversification, and types of mentoring configurations. This session is for all students participating in HERO or Med Mentors SIG activities.

Project-Specific Training – HERO 9/15/26 6:00-7:30 & 9/22/26 (virtual) and MedMentors 9/14/26

AHEC Spotlight: Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences (HOPE)

Friday, Sept 18 | noon-1:00 | Med Ed 200 Sullivan Classroom

Many youth face challenges such as social isolation, limited mental health supports, and economic stressors rooted in poverty. The HOPE framework can help shift the conversation from adverse experiences to positive ones that build resilience. It emphasizes the importance of nurturing relationships, safe environments, and community connections as protective factors.

Mentoring Discussion Group #1 Monday 10/5

AHEC Spotlight: Cross Cultural Perspectives on Mental Health and Wellness

Monday, Oct 19 5:00-6:30 MedEd 200 classroom

Mental health and substance use disorders are among the top areas in Community Needs assessments across Vermont. This in-person panel event is an opportunity to hear from community leaders as they discuss cultural influences on our understanding of mental health and wellness.

Mentoring Discussion Group #2 Monday November 2 | noon-1:00 MedEd 100 Larner

Mentoring Discussion Group #3 Monday, December 7 | noon-1:00 MedEd 100 Larner

LCOM Mentoring Panel | Monday, January 11 1:00 MedEd 200 Sullivan Classroom

This in-person panel discussion features LCOM faculty members who are strong mentoring champions. They will share their personal experiences with mentoring and why they believe that mentoring is essential in medical education.

Learning activities

1. **Independent Learning:** Readings on mentoring in secondary and higher education, youth development, and community-based contexts; Podcasts featuring professionals from education, health care, and youth development exploring mentoring ethics and developmental milestones of a mentoring relationship. CME recorded events from the National Health Equity Grand Rounds Learning Series available through the AMA Ed Hub.
2. **In-person Learning:** The Office of Primary Care/AHEC provides extracurricular training opportunities for the Lerner community throughout the year. **AHEC Spotlight** is a series of events which feature various voices from the Vermont medical community, often with a focus on primary care, rural health, and/or community efforts to advance health and health care access for Vermonters. Sessions may highlight primary care as an essential foundation for health and partnerships that are grounded in the communities they serve. We believe that regardless of medical specialty or future geographical location, these sessions and the AHEC Scholars priority areas are relevant for all medical students. Some AHEC Spotlight sessions are required for this pathway; others are recommended and included in the 'optional' section of your training hours log. Many sessions are recorded for those with scheduling conflicts.
3. **Online discussion board:** Reflection prompts aimed at synthesizing the content and applying it to one's own mentoring practice.
4. **Group discussions:** In-person opportunities for the full group discussion on chosen topics, as well as short opportunities during HERO or Med-Mentor specific training or meetings.

Field Activities (40 Hours)

Accepted students will be offered the opportunity to complete field activities in either the HERO Mentoring or MedMentors SIG.

HERO Mentoring SIG

The HERO Mentoring Student Interest Group (SIG) provides **virtual**, one-to-one mentorship to Vermont high school students as part of the Northern Vermont AHEC's HERO Mentoring Program. HERO, which stands for *Health Exploration Resources and Opportunities*, aims to enhance science achievement and post-secondary pathway planning for teens interested in exploring health careers, human body systems, related diseases and injuries, and community health issues. Over the years, SIG leaders and Northern Vermont AHEC advisors have strengthened and shaped the evolution of the program to be adaptable to individual student interests and levels of prior knowledge. The virtual platform and meeting times are set by each mentor/mentee pair to ensure sessions are mutually convenient for both the mentee and the medical student mentor. This program design lends to more equitable access for those students who may otherwise not be able to participate.

This year's program will offer two cohorts of students: (1) serving students in Chittenden County, and (2) serving students in the Northern Counties of Vermont. These two cohorts allow the program to reach students of all backgrounds, including those who are traditionally underrepresented in medicine and those who live in economically underserved or rural areas.

All HERO Mentors are required to participate in the AHEC Scholars Fall 80-hour Pathway and will follow a structured schedule of events. Mentors log their progress to fulfill their 40-hour field requirements *and* the 40-hour didactic training. This combination provides medical students with comprehensive training in mentoring practices and strategies for facilitating engaging online discussions and educational experiences. Mentors in the HERO Mentoring Program are provided with a curriculum that is designed with a student-centered approach to support individualized learning and goal setting.

HERO Field Experience Requirements

The HERO Mentoring 40-hour Field Experience is designed to be structured, but flexible enough to accommodate busy schedules for both high schools student mentees and medical student mentors. Requirements of the HERO Mentoring 40-hour Field Experience span from September 11th, 2026 to December 31st 2026, and include the following:

- **HERO Mentoring Team Meetings/Specific Trainings, including Team Check-Ins.**
 - Introduction to the HERO Mentoring Program (In-Person)
 - Virtual HERO Mentoring Training (Zoom)
 - Check in #1
 - Check in #2
 - Check in #3
- **Live HERO Mentoring 'Group' Sessions.**
 - HERO Launch Session
 - HERO Virtual Celebration
- **Weekly 1-to-1 Meetings.**
 - Mentors will lead eight structured sessions (~75 minutes each) in alignment with the provided HERO Mentoring curriculum. Meetings are scheduled once per week between October 1st, 2026 – December 31st, 2026, at a time that works for both the mentor and mentee.
- **Submitting Reflection Forms.**
 - At the end of each session with your mentee, both mentors and mentees will complete a reflection form. This will be used to track progress for each pair and reviewed by AHEC advisors to see how things are going.

Med Mentors SIG

The MedMentors Student Interest Group (SIG) provides **in-person** individual and group mentoring opportunities for students at various stages of career exploration and planning, including high school, undergraduate, post-baccalaureate learners and beyond. The MedMentors SIG aims to encourage, support, and prepare students interested in pursuing careers in medicine or other health professions.

In collaboration with the Vermont AHEC Network, the MedMentors SIG offers one-on-one matching between medical students and pre-health students, as well as hands-on pre-health clinics, workshops, and educational programming. Recognizing the importance of diversity and representation in healthcare, mentors can expect to support students of all backgrounds. The program focuses on mentoring throughout all stages of the career planning journey, including early exploration of health-career fields, navigating the complexities of the health professions application process, medical education and career as a physician.

MedMentors participating in the AHEC Scholars 80-hour pathway* will choose and log a variety of eligible activities and attend several scheduled events to fulfill their 40-field hour requirement *and* the 40-hour didactic training. This combination provides medical students with comprehensive training in mentoring practices, strategies for facilitating engaging in-person discussions, and information about pre-health resources for undergraduate and pre-medical students at UVM.

MedMentor Field Experience Requirements:

The MedMentors 40-hour Field Experience is designed to be flexible and encourage consistent engagement from medical students over the course of the entire academic year. Requirements of the

MedMentor 40-hour Field Experience span the course of both fall and spring academic semesters and include the following:

- **MedMentor Team Meetings.**
 - Meetings provide an opportunity to check in, plan activities, review feedback, and make program adjustments.
- **Individual Mentoring.**
 - 5 sessions per semester, for a total of at least 10 hours (plus prep, as needed).
 - This includes one-to-one mentoring with a student or students interested in science and medicine.
 - Mentors are matched with their mentee(s) based on answers to a survey that asks which factors they feel are important to the match, including shared experiences, backgrounds, and identity.
- **Pre-Health Clinics.**
 - 2 AHEC Pre-Health Clinics per semester, for a total of 4.
 - This includes attendance and active engagement at pre-planned AHEC Pre-Health Clinics.
 - While preparation is not required to meet this expectation, students who assist AHEC Staff with planning or facilitating a clinic may apply preparation time toward their Leadership Support and Event Planning hours (see below for more information).
- **Pre-Health Workshops.**
 - 2 MedMentor Workshops per semester, for a total of 4.
 - This includes attendance and active engagement in workshop discussions and collaboration with workshop leaders to support facilitation.
 - While preparation is not required to meet this expectation, students who plan or facilitate workshops may count preparation time toward Leadership Support and Event planning hours (see below for more information).
- **Leadership Support and Event Planning.**
 - 5 hours (minimum) per semester, for a total of 10.
 - Activities that satisfy this expectation include:
 - Assisting MedMentor Leaders with mentor-mentee recruitment and matching.
 - Planning, promoting, and facilitating pre-health clinics and workshops.
 - Collaborating with MedMentor Leaders and AHEC staff to develop new education content and future programming opportunities.

View the AHEC Fall 2026 Pre-Health Calendar here: [AHEC Pre-Health-Schedule FALL-Semester-2026 8.7.26.pdf](#)

*Important note: LCOM Students in all four years may participate in MedMentors without being on the AHEC Scholars Pathway Track. This is a more limited commitment and does not count as an eligible activity toward meeting AHEC Scholars requirements. For general SIG related questions, MedMentor SIG Leaders can be reached at medmentors@med.uvm.edu

AHEC Scholars program and application questions can be directed to Patti Smith Urie, Outreach Professional, AHEC Scholars, at patti.smith-urie@med.uvm.edu

AHEC SIG Education and Mentoring pathway application

Interested students should apply by **Tuesday, Sept 1**. Applicants commit to participating in the required activities described in this overview. The application asks students to rank the

mentoring programs they are most interested in. While we do our best to accept students into a top choice, this is not always possible due to program capacity (number of mentees) or other factors. Placement decisions are made based on applicant qualifications and the needs of each program. Students will be notified/offered a spot in the program by mid-September. The application will remain open from **8/14/26-9/1/26**, or until all mentoring positions are filled.

Application link: <https://redcap.link/MentoringPathway2026Application>

AHEC Scholars program and application questions can be directed to: Patti Smith Urie, Outreach Professional, AHEC Scholars. Patti.smith-urie@med.uvm.edu