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From: Missouri Area Health Education Centers

Professional Development

Professional Development is defined in www.businessdictionary.com as the process of improving and increasing capabilities of staff through access to education and training opportunities in the workplace, through outside organization or through watching others perform the job.

Early in July, nearly 20 staff members from AHECs across Missouri participated in professional development at the biannual National AHEC Organization (NAO) conference, “AHEC on the Hill: *Diversity, Distribution, and Practice Transformation*” in Washington, D.C. As president of NAO, Northwest Missouri AHEC regional director Paula Overfelt provided leadership and direction for the planning associated with the conference. Over 400 people from around the country attended the conference.

The four plenary sessions included presentations by Missourian, Jon Doolittle, President of the Northwest Missouri Medical Center; a student panel discussing their AHEC experiences and the assistance they received from AHEC; a conversation with the Lacks family whose family member contributed the immortal HeLa cells utilized in medical research; and Matt Carter, three-time cancer survivor. Each of the plenary sessions provided content relevant to and focused on the mission of AHEC.

A general session was presented by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) which provides grant funding for the AHECs. Of particular interest to attendees was the announcement of how additional funding from Congress will be equitably distributed to the states. During the HRSA session, additional information about the new Scholars initiative was presented and those in attendance were allowed time to ask questions for clarification and present concerns to the HRSA staff. AHEC has one of the most consistent and successful track records of the HRSA Initiatives.

Over 100 breakout sessions on a variety of topics were presented by AHECs from across the United States. Some of the most popular sessions focused on the new Scholars program and preceptor development, topics impacting AHECs in each state.

Hill visits to Missouri’s Members of the House of Representatives and two Senators provided a great opportunity for AHEC staff to explain the importance of the services of AHEC and its impact upon economic development of our state. Missouri AHEC staff was able to visit with each of the Senators, Congressmen or Congresswomen or their designee. The Annual Report Highlights flyer was of particular interest and several commented about how strong the outcomes were for serving those from rural/disadvantaged backgrounds and underrepresented minorities.

Occasionally, it is important to learn, recharge and recommit to the mission of AHEC. Through this conference, many were able to do just that. We returned to Missouri committed to continue the AHEC mission for our students, our medical professionals and our communities.

MAHEC: Connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health



Missouri attendees ready to meet with their Congressional Representatives

MAHEC is a partnership of seven locally-governed organizations and three university-based health professions education programs working statewide to increase the number of Missouri youth entering stable, high-paying jobs as healthcare professionals and the number of professionals caring for underserved populations.

The MAHEC partners include:

- A.T. Still University – Kirksville
- University of Missouri – Columbia
- Saint Louis University
- Northeast Missouri AHEC – Kirksville
- Northwest Missouri AHEC – St. Joseph
- West Central Missouri AHEC – Lexington
- Mid-Missouri AHEC – Rolla
- East Central Missouri AHEC – St. Louis
- Southeastern Missouri AHEC – Poplar Bluff
- Southwest Missouri AHEC – Springfield