

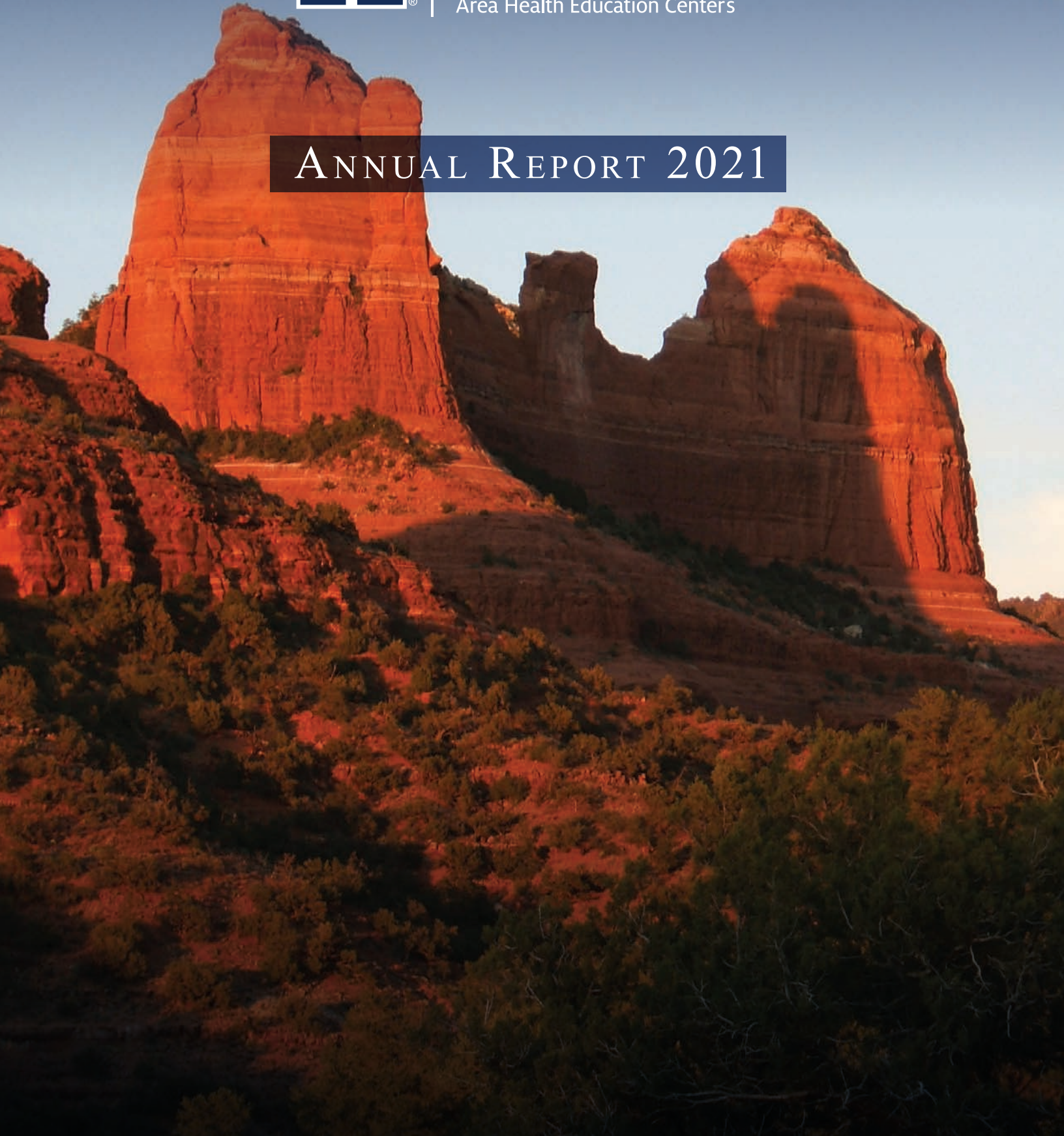


THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Arizona **AHEC**

Area Health Education Centers

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021





*Dan Derksen, Pacheta Lake, White Mountain Apache Reservation*

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## Arizona AHEC Program Mission Statement:

*To enhance access to quality health care, particularly primary and preventive care, by improving the supply and distribution of health care professionals through academic community educational partnerships in rural and urban medically underserved areas.*

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Congress authorized the Federal Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program in 1971 (PL III-148 § 751 PHSA). There are now 56 AHEC Programs and 235 Regional Centers in 48 U.S. states and territories. In 1984, Andy Nichols, MD, founded the Arizona Area Health Education Center (AzAHEC) Program in Tucson with the first AzAHEC Regional Center opening in Nogales. Today, five AzAHEC Regional Centers support health professions education, provide continuing education for health professionals, address health disparities, and local health workforce. A sixth Regional Center focused on American Indian healthcare workforce needs has been authorized by the State of Arizona and is currently being developed.

### AzAHEC Program Personnel

Dan Derksen, MD, Senior Advisor and Principal Investigator

Leila Barraza, JD, MPH, Director and Co-Investigator

Jennifer Zuñiga, BA, Associate Director

Amanda Perkins, MEd, CPA, Assistant Finance Director

Colleen Reed, BA, Program Coordinator, Sr.

Edgardo Figueroa, BA, Program Manager

Nicole Paredes, MEd, Program Manager

Sonia Cota-Robles, JD, PhD, Evaluation Specialist

Marni Rawiszer, MPH, Program Coordinator

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## 9,413 individuals participated in the following activities:

### Rural & Urban Underserved Health Professions Trainee Field Experiences

From July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, the Arizona AHEC Program supported the following unduplicated field experiences in AzaHEC Regional Centers, Rural Health Professions Programs and Residency Programs for over 330,000 learner contact hours:

| Academic Discipline/Program                 | # of Trainees | # of Field Experiences |
|---|---------------|------------------------|
| Medical Residency                           | 55            | 113                    |
| Pharmacy School                             | 137           | 292                    |
| Other Undergrad. Health-related Disciplines | 51            | 53                     |
| Nursing or Medical Assistant                | 145           | 146                    |
| RN, Nurse Anesthetist or Other Nurse        | 22            | 25                     |
| Dentistry and Dental Hygiene                | 58            | 86                     |
| Graduate - Behavioral Health                | 2             | 2                      |
| Nurse Practitioner                          | 170           | 322                    |
| Public Health                               | 258           | 276                    |
| Graduate - Social Work                      | 8             | 8                      |
| Medical School                              | 340           | 948                    |
| Phlebotomy Technician                       | 30            | 39                     |
| Physical Therapy                            | 9             | 10                     |
| Physician Assistant                         | 83            | 164                    |
| Podiatry School                             | 2             | 2                      |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>1,370</b>  | <b>2,486</b>           |

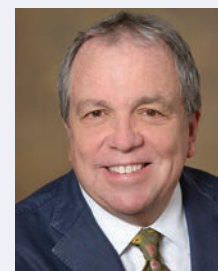
### Pre-College and College (K-16) Health Career Preparation Programs in Rural and Urban Underserved Areas: 3,016 participants

Participants in K-16 Health Career Preparation Programs included 1,008 K-16 students in 26 health career clubs, inclusive of 917 students in academic year programs and summer programs at the five AzaHEC Regional Centers and 91 students in three summer UArizona programs (Frontera, Med-Start, and BLAISER). A total of 1,984 students and adults (parents, teachers and others) participated in other health career events, including health career fairs at Regional Centers.

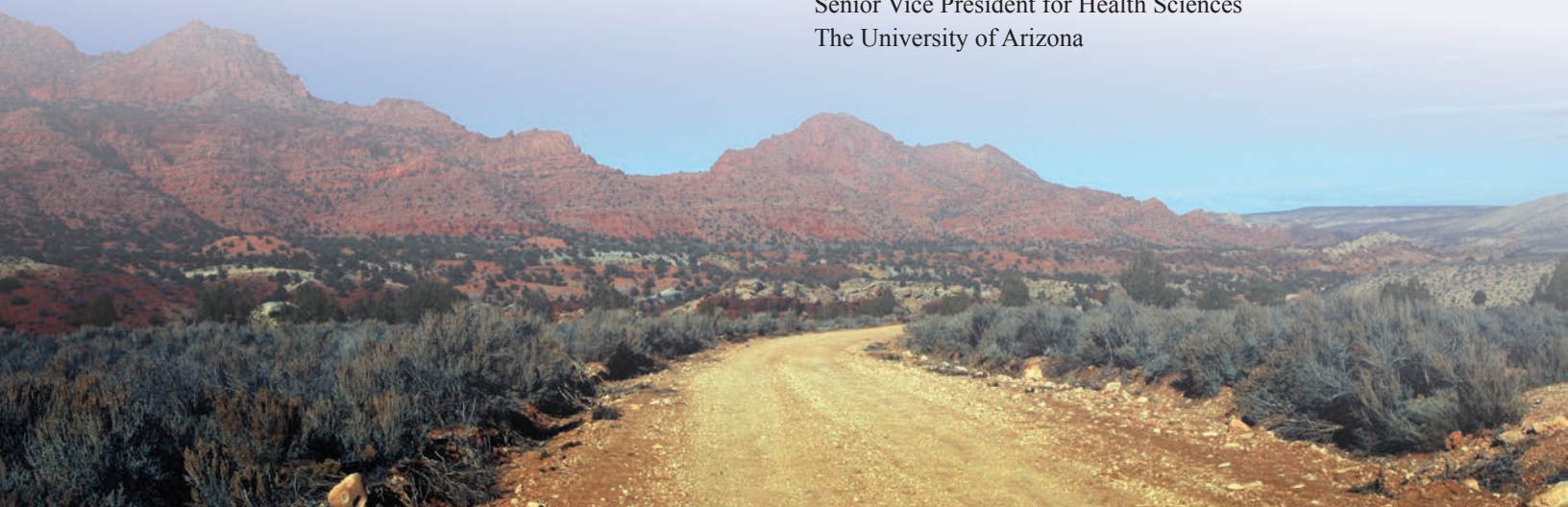
### Health Professions Continuing Education Participants

Participants at 185 continuing education events included 5,051 physicians, dentists, public health and allied health professionals, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, registered nurses and physician assistants.

*In 2020-21, the AzaHEC Program, its five AzaHEC Regional Centers and the nine Rural Health Professional Programs at UArizona, NAU, and ASU have continued to provide innovative, community-based interprofessional education in new and innovative ways during these unprecedented times. I congratulate them on their unwavering commitment to Arizona's rural and urban underserved communities.*



**Michael D. Dake, MD**  
Senior Vice President for Health Sciences  
The University of Arizona



Since 1984 the Arizona Area Health Educations Center (AzAHEC) Program has served Arizona through health professions workforce recruitment, training, and retention in its rural and urban underserved communities.

The 2020-21 AzAHEC Annual report highlights progress and achievements over the last 12 months. A total of 1,370 health profession students representing over 40 universities and residency programs participated in community-based clinical and experiential training in collaboration with Arizona's five AHEC Regional Centers, nine Rural Health Professions Programs (RHPPs) from the state's three public universities, and graduate medical education (GME) residency programs at Banner University Medical Center South (BUMC-S) and North Country HealthCare (also known as the Colorado Plateau Center for Health Professions in Northern Arizona).

The AHEC Scholars Program, a two-year interprofessional education program that builds on the RHPPs, graduated 47 students from its second cohort in Spring 2021. Forty-six AHEC Scholars in our third cohort completed their first of two years (i.e., 2020-22) of their interprofessional program including community immersions at one of the five AHEC Regional Centers. Each cohort gained greater knowledge through interprofessional curricula with specific didactic and community-based training activities focused on rural and/or urban underserved communities. In Fall 2021, a fourth cohort will be welcomed and include health profession students from nine graduate-level RHPP programs and three undergraduate-level programs.

Continuing education for working health professionals remains a core AzAHEC activity. Each Regional Center identifies and addresses this need, resulting in 185 continuing education events across all five regions offered to more than 5,000 health professionals over the last year.

The five AzAHEC Regional Centers hosted 26 health career clubs reaching 917 students participating in health career learning programs in a structured curriculum. Frontera, Med-Start, and BLAISER provided summer intensive programs at the University of Arizona-Tucson for 91 future health professionals. The AzAHEC Regional Centers provided health education events to 1,984 elementary through high school students, and to nearly 8,700 community members on health-related topics.

AzAHEC began fiscal year 2021-22 welcoming a new Regional Center, the Southern Arizona Area Health Education

Center (SAAHEC) on September 1, 2021. SAAHEC, whose parent organization is El Rio Health, serves Pima, Cochise, and Santa Cruz Counties. SAAHEC replaced Southeast Arizona Area Health Education Center (SEAHEC) who chose not to respond to the Southern Arizona AHEC Regional Center competing continuation Request for Proposals (RFP) over the summer of 2021. The AzAHEC Program appreciates the many contributions that SEAHEC made in meeting the AHEC mission over their years as an AHEC Regional Center, and wishes them success in their new focus on border health, migration, and advocacy.



In Spring 2021, Arizona Governor Ducey signed legislation authorizing the creation of a sixth AzAHEC Regional Center that will focus on the American Indian health system and workforce. Meetings with tribal partners will occur in Fall 2021 to prepare for an RFP for the creation of the new Tribal AHEC Regional Center in early 2022.

On behalf of the Arizona AHEC Program, we thank our federal partners, providers and collaborators and educators from across the state in carrying out our mission.

Sincerely,

**Leila Barraza, JD, MPH**

Director and Co-Investigator, AzAHEC Program  
Associate Professor, Zuckerman College of Public Health The  
University of Arizona Health Sciences

**Daniel Derksen, MD**

Senior Advisor & PI, AzAHEC Program  
Associate Vice President  
Office of the Senior VP for Health Sciences  
The University of Arizona

## About AzaAHEC

- Initiated in 1984 with the first AzaAHEC Regional Center opening in Nogales to recruit, train, and retain a primary care workforce committed to helping underserved populations.
- Expanded to a total of five AHEC Regional Centers serving all 15 Arizona counties by 1989.
- Housed in the UArizona Health Sciences Office of the Senior Vice President as a Sponsored Project.
- Enacted in Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) §§ 15-1643, 15-1644, 15-1645, and 5-572(C).
- Funded by federal and required non-federal matching funds.
- Required non-federal match funded by the State of Arizona lottery funds resulting from a citizen ballot initiative directing support to the AzaAHEC Program and Regional Centers.
- Enacted legislation in the 2021 legislative session to create a sixth AHEC Regional Center focused on the American Indian health system to be implemented in 2022.

## Structure

The University of Arizona (UArizona) in Tucson administers the AzaAHEC Program and has formal contracts with the five AzaAHEC Regional Centers located strategically statewide. The AzaAHEC Program and Regional Centers carry out the mission, goals, objectives, and work plan by creating, coordinating, and implementing a scope of work designed to address the health professions education and training needs within each Regional Center service area, updated each year. Following federal guidelines and as required by state procurement guidelines, the Regional Centers undergo a periodic formal competing continuation Request for Proposal process staggered such that one or two RFPs are evaluated per year.

The AzaAHEC Program Director (Leila Barraza, JD, MPH) and Senior Advisor and Principal Investigator (Daniel Derksen, MD, Associate VP for Health Sciences) consult regularly with the AzaAHEC Advisory Commission, who represent health educators, health professionals, and community members serving and/or living in rural and urban medically underserved Arizona communities. Other committees involve faculty, staff, and students at participating health professions colleges at Arizona's three public universities under the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) authority: Arizona State University (ASU), Northern Arizona University (NAU), and UArizona. Formal reports are submitted regularly to the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), and annually to ABOR and the Arizona State Legislature.

Each AzaAHEC Regional Center has its own governing board, comprised of health care providers and consumers who reflect the demographic, racial, and ethnic diversity of the Center's geographic service area.

## AzaAHEC Focus Areas 2020-2021

The AzaAHEC Program and Regional Centers expanded statewide efforts to strengthen Arizona's health professions workforce pathways to practice including K-12, post-secondary health professions students, and health professionals from many disciplines. Regional Centers supported activities to promote health awareness in their communities.

■ **Youth (K-16) Health Career Programs:** the AzaAHEC Program and Regional Centers supported activities to introduce Arizona's youth to health careers, working with local high schools to support health career clubs (e.g., Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) chapters, Border Latino and American Indian Summer Exposure to Research (BLAISER), Focusing Research on the Border Area (FRONTERA), and the Med-Start Health Careers Program).

■ **Health Professions Trainee Education:** the AzaAHEC Program, Rural Health Profession Programs (RHPPs), and Regional Centers supported clinical rotations, internships, and Graduate Medical Education (GME, aka residency training). Regional Centers provided students with in-depth orientation to the local communities. Some trainees received housing, travel, and related expense support for experiences in remote areas. Dedicated, experienced preceptors and strong academic partnerships with colleges and universities provided high quality community-based education.

■ **AzaAHEC Scholars:** The second cohort completed their two-year program; a third Scholar cohort was accepted and had an immersion experience at their assigned AzaAHEC Regional Center. Scholars get advanced, interprofessional community-based experiences in AHEC Regional Center communities and Rural Health Professions Programs. Faculty mentors from each RHPP provided AzaAHEC Scholars with continuity throughout the two-year program.

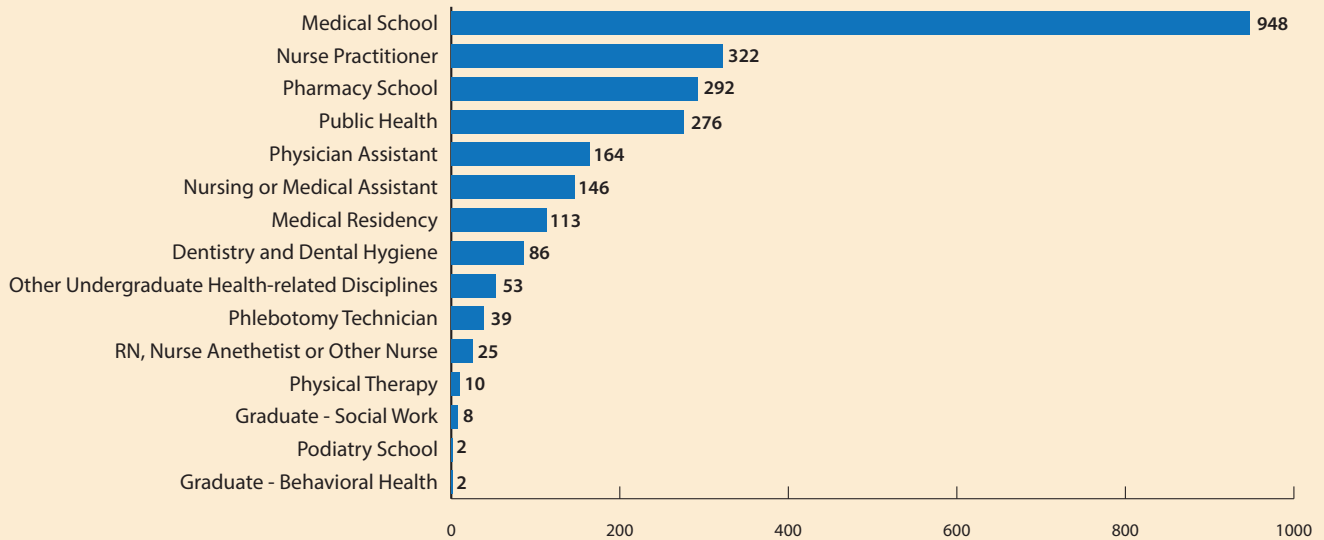
■ **Continuing Education (CE/CME) for Health Professionals:** Regional Centers sponsored numerous CE/CME events throughout the year for health professionals statewide.

■ **Community Health Promotion:** Regional Centers coordinated and supported health education activities and events for local community members throughout Arizona's rural and urban underserved areas.

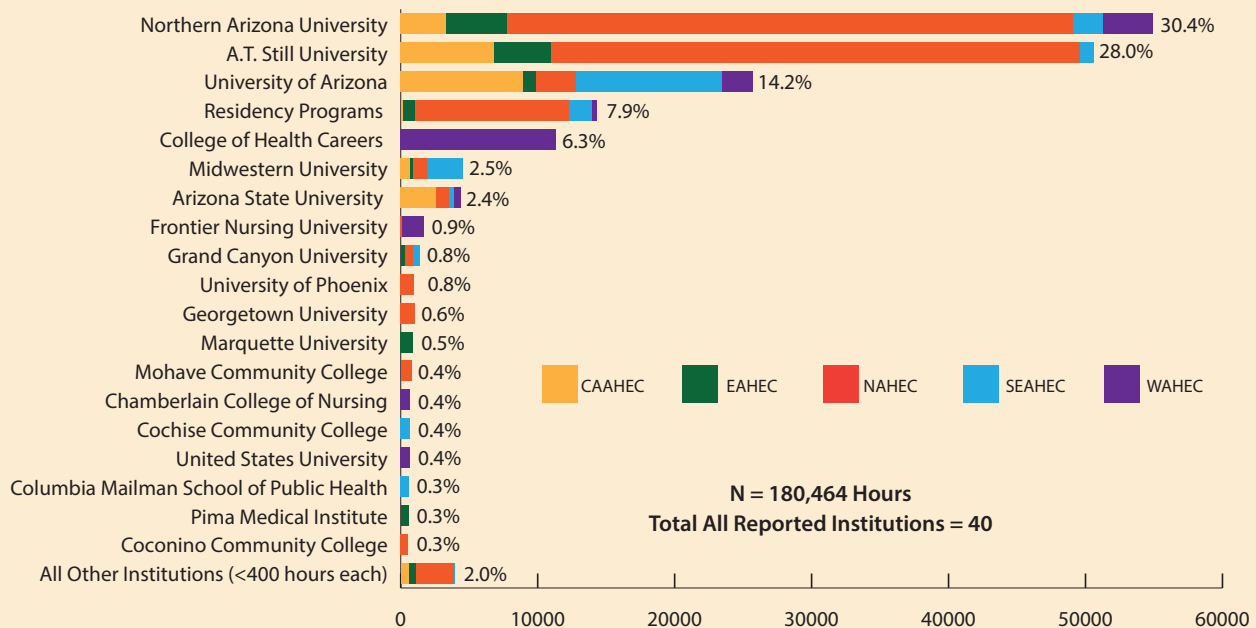


Colleen Reed, Payson, AZ

### AzAHEC Health Professions Clinical Rotations by Trainee Discipline (N=2,486)



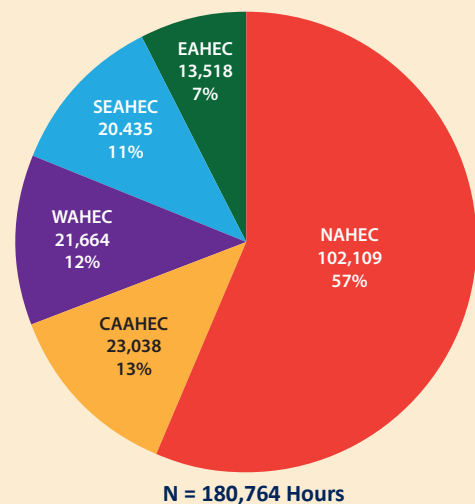
### AzAHEC Rotation Hours by Regional Center and Academic Institution: July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



### AzAHEC Rotation Hours, Number of Rotations and Number of Trainees by Center, July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

| Regional Center    | Total Rotation Hours | Number of Rotations | Total Trainees |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| CAAHEC             | 23,038               | 127                 | 122            |
| EAHEC              | 13,518               | 71                  | 62             |
| NAHEC              | 102,109              | 946                 | 373            |
| SEAHEC             | 20,435               | 147                 | 140            |
| WAHEC              | 21,664               | 228                 | 210            |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b> | <b>180,764</b>       | <b>1,519</b>        | <b>907</b>     |

### AzAHEC Rotation Hours by Regional Center July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



## The AzaHEC Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP) Overview

The Arizona State Legislature authorized the Rural Health Professions Program in 2007 by state statute (ARS § 15-1754). It is now a core component of the AzaHEC Program to address shortages of health professionals in rural and urban underserved Arizona communities. In 2020-21, 575 students from UArizona, ASU, and NAU RHPPs provided a total of 1,018 rural and underserved training experiences.

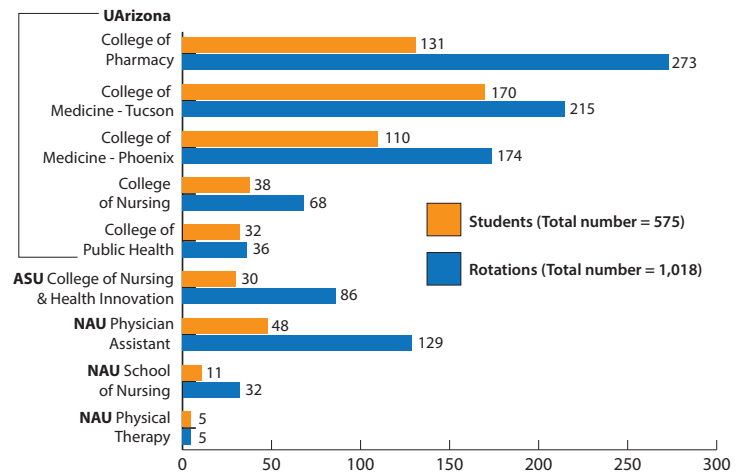
RHPPs provide rural training experiences for health professions students in the public universities under the Arizona Board of Regents: University of Arizona Health Sciences Colleges of Nursing, Pharmacy, Medicine (COM-Tucson and COM-Phoenix), and Public Health; the Arizona State University (ASU) Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation, and the Northern Arizona University (NAU) School of Nursing, Department of Physical Therapy, and Department of Physician Assistant Studies.

RHPPs prepare health professions students for practice in Arizona's rural communities. The AzaHEC Program and AzaHEC Regional Centers support urban, medically underserved training experiences to address primary care provider shortages. While RHPP student participation is voluntary, statutorily, UArizona selects 15 medical, four pharmacy and ten nurse practitioner students; ASU selects four, and NAU selects two nurse practitioner students for RHPP. The number of participating RHPP students and programs has grown significantly above these statutory requirements.

RHPPs are primary care rural and urban underserved training tracks for the UArizona COM-P and COM-T Medical students, the College of Nursing Nurse Practitioner (NP) students, the College of Pharmacy PharmD students, and the College of Public Health Master of Public Health (MPH) students; NAU Physician Assistant (PA), Physical Therapy (PT) and NP students; and ASU NP students. NAU Physical Therapy students were added to the RHPP in FY 2020-21.



**AzaHEC RHPP Students by Participating Institution  
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021**



*“The education that was provided to me as a health-care worker has been helpful in ways beyond description. I will use so many of the tools given to understand the areas that I will work to find the needs and fill them to my best abilities. I will also cherish the inter-professional relationships gained, along with the new ways that I learned to work with others.” – 2019-21 AHEC Scholar Feedback*

## Tuba City Housing

AzaHEC leases a four-bedroom, two bath modular home from the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation Housing Office so students have housing during their clinical rotations. During 2020-21, eight RHPP and other UArizona Health Profession students were housed for a total of 269 nights. This included six medical students, one pharmacy student, and one nurse anesthetist student. This represented a slight increase from the prior year's housing. Living in the community enhances the AzaHEC student experience working interprofessionally in a tribal community. Housing activity is expected to continue to increase as in person rotation restrictions are lifted post-pandemic.



## AzAHEC Scholars Two-Year Program

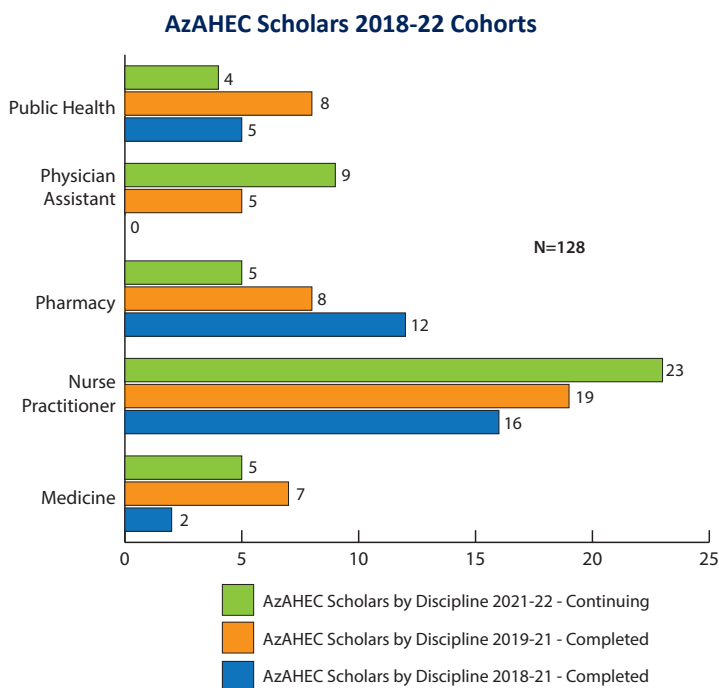
The Arizona Area Health Education Center (AzAHEC) Scholars Program is a two-year interprofessional program providing graduate-level health profession students with advanced community-based experiences in rural and underserved settings in the five AzAHEC Regional Center services areas. Participants are selected from the AzAHEC RHPPs.

To qualify, Scholars must be enrolled in an RHPP and meet all academic and didactic training requirements of their graduate-level health professional program. Scholars are matched into interprofessional groups at one of the five AHEC Regional Centers for advanced community-based experiences in rural and underserved settings. RHPPs identify Faculty Mentors to support and direct interprofessional cohorts at each Regional Center.

Since inception of the AHEC Scholars Program, a total of 130 scholars have either completed the program or remain enrolled for their capstone year of the program as follows:

- Thirty-five (35) scholars completed the first (2018-20) cohort.
- Forty-seven (47) scholars completed the second (2019-21) cohort.
- Forty-six (46) scholars are in the third (2020-22) AzAHEC Scholars cohort and remain enrolled in the program.

The NAU Department of Physical Therapy was added to the RHPP beginning in FY 2020-21 and will join the Scholars Program beginning Fall 2021. Undergraduate students, including those from the NAU Department of Dental Hygiene and UArizona College of Nursing, will join the Scholars Program beginning in the Fall of 2021.



## Evaluations

AzAHEC evaluates programs based on activity participation reported by partners and through surveys collected from participants in four activity types:

- Health profession trainees (i.e., students and residents) who participated in rotations
- Health profession students who participated in the AHEC Scholars Program
- Licensed and other health professionals who received Continuing Education (CE)
- High School and Undergraduate students who participated in structured pipeline programs.

Evaluation findings indicate that AzAHEC's programming is reaching diverse populations and leading to positive outcomes. Highlights of survey responses include:

- In 77% of responses to a post-rotation survey, the respondent indicated that the rotation had increased their likelihood to select practice in a rural or medically underserved area. After completing a rotation, 37% of responses reflected a more positive belief about the ability of rural/medically underserved communities to meet lifestyle needs compared with before the rotation.
- Of the AHEC Scholars who completed the two-year program in 2020 and responded to the survey, nearly all (95%) reported that they intend to become employed or pursue further training in a medically underserved setting. The majority (62%) indicated an intention to become employed or pursue further training in a rural setting.
- Most respondents to the Continuing Education survey (84%) indicated they were "likely" or "very likely" to implement the CE material into their practice.
- Over 97% of 9-16th grade respondents to the Pipeline Program Survey reported that they were "very interested" in pursuing a health career. Nearly all respondents (91%) reported that their health career program had increased their knowledge of health careers with 66% reporting "very much" and 25% reporting "pretty much."

## AzaHEC Scholars Program COVID-19

HRSA awarded supplemental funding to the AzaHEC Program in late Spring of 2020 to develop a one-year program to prepare and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. AzaHEC developed three major components of the COVID-19 Project.

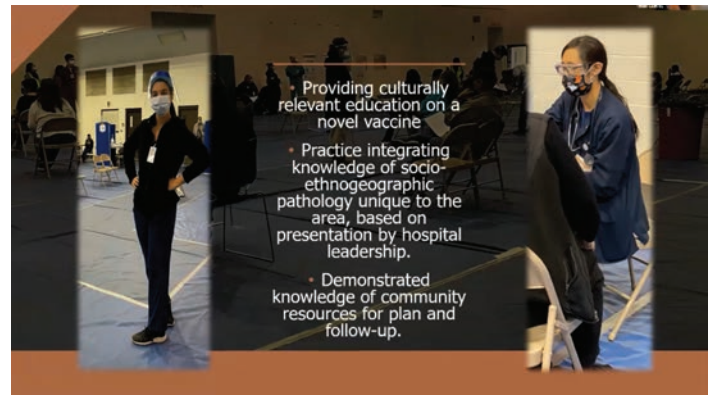
### COVID Scholar Teams

The initial response to the supplemental funding incorporated COVID-19 AHEC Scholars from the three ABOR institutions, including Arizona State University (5), Northern Arizona University (9), and University of Arizona (17). The 31 program participants included health profession students from the following disciplines: medicine (3); nurse practitioner (13); registered nursing (3); pharmacy (2); physician assistant (8); and undergraduate sciences (2). Scholars were assigned to interprofessional teams under the direction and mentorship of an interprofessional team of six faculty mentors. The COVID-19 Scholars and faculty participated in a one-year collaboration with community-based sites to prevent, prepare, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in communities across Arizona. All activities were via distance learning. Each team made virtual podium presentations on their team's work in April 2021 at the AzaHEC's Ninth Annual Interprofessional RHPP Conference.\*



### Gallup Indian Medical Center (GIMC) Vaccine Administration Community Immersion Team

The second phase of the project was accomplished in collaboration with the UArizona College of Nursing (CON) and CAAHEC. Nine UArizona CON nurse practitioner students and four faculty participated in two one-week vaccine administration community immersions of the COVID-19 Project at Gallup Indian Medicine Center (GIMC). GIMC is in the federally recognized Navajo Nation that spans 27,000 sq. mi. over portions of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The Navajo Nation is the largest land area retained by an indigenous tribe in the U.S. and is larger in size than ten states.



Nurse Practitioner students gave over 1,100 Moderna vaccinations across the vast Navajo Nation, including in the Primary/Urgent Care Walk-In Clinic, COVID-19 Motel & Fast-Track, and the Houck Chapter House in Houck, Arizona. Students helped set up and staff a five-tent Fast Track. Under the guidance of preceptors, students performed physical examinations, palliative care home visits and saw patients in Urgent Care and Emergency Departments (ED). On-site interprofessional collaboration occurred with GIMC physicians, pharmacists, and registered nurses.

A virtual panel discussion “Gallup Indian Medical Center Covid-19 Relief Project: A Service-Learning Immersion” consisting of the UArizona CON Students and Faculty and the GIMC Health Professional Staff was presented in April 2021 at the AzaHEC Ninth Annual Interprofessional RHPP Conference.\*

### Gallup Indian Medical Center Contact Tracing Team

CAAHEC partnered with the Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment (COPE) Program to inform and help reduce the burden of COVID-19 among Navajo Nation community members by training and supporting COVID Case Management at GIMC. The Case Management Team included Public Health Nurses, Community Health Representatives (CHRs), Contact Tracers, students, and volunteers. The 26 fully trained and certified callers included 20 students from AT Still University, UArizona, and ASU. Additionally, six (6) community members from GIMC participated.

\* In collaboration with the Arizona Telemedicine Program, the COVID Scholars presentation and the “Gallup Indian Medical Center COVID-19 Relief Project: A Service-Learning Immersion” were presented at the Ninth Annual Interprofessional Rural Health Professions conference in April 2021. These presentations can be viewed at:

<https://azahec.uahs.arizona.edu/events/9th-annual-interprofessional-rural-health-professions-program-conference>

## Ninth Annual Interprofessional Rural Health Professions Conference

The Ninth Annual Interprofessional Rural Health Professions Conference was held on April 9-10, 2021. In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, social distancing guidelines, state and institutional requirements, it was held as an internet-based Zoom event in collaboration with Arizona Telemedicine Program.

The two-day conference began with Carlos Gonzales, M.D., and RHPP Director, UArizona-COM Tucson offering a traditional tribal blessing ceremony. Over 275 attendees included RHPP Students, AHEC Scholars, COVID Scholars, faculty, preceptors, RHPP and Regional Center directors and staff, and High School Pipeline Students.

On April 9 Francisco Garcia, M.D., MPH, Pima County Chief Medical Officer, spoke on “How the Pandemic Is Changing the Way We Think About Equity in Pima County.” Ron Weinstein, M.D., Director of UArizona Telemedicine Program, spoke on “Telehealth in the Time of COVID.”



Francisco Garcia, MD

The five COVID Scholar Cohort groups presented their findings on the following topics:

- Combating COVID-19 through Community Education
- COVID-19 Education Series for Latinx Communities and Addressing Essential Care Staff Resiliency
- Increasing Awareness of COVID-19 Precautions in a Northern Arizona Community Food Bank
- Aiding Healthcare Workers with Burnout and Vaccine Hesitancy
- SARS-CoV2 Vaccine Hesitancy Among Young Adults in Arizona: 18-26yo

April 10 began with a panel presentation on “Gallup Indian Medical Center COVID-19 Relief Project: A Service-Learning Immersion.” Faculty and students from UArizona CON and health professional leaders from Gallup Indian Medical Center participated on the panel, including: Dr. Timian Godfrey, Dr. Kevin Gaines, Dr. Lisa Kiser, Myra Francisco, Jimis Shukri, Sami Delassio, Anne Fong, Lindsay DeWolfe, and Stephanie Hallenbeck.

The five AHEC Scholars Year Two (2019-21) Cohort groups presented their findings on the following topics:

- ASP CAAHEC Group – COVID-19: Impact, Mitigation, and Future Implications for Central Phoenix
- ASP NAHEC Group – COVID-19 and Impacts on Rural Mental Health Crisis on Adolescent in the Communities of Coconino County

- ASP SEAHEC Group – Bridging the Gap in Opioid Awareness in Santa Cruz County
- ASP EAHEC Group – Integrating Community Paramedicine in Payson
- ASP WAHEC Group – Understanding Skin Cancer Awareness

The conference featured 55 poster presentations, including posters from the third (2020-22) AzaHEC Scholars cohort who completed their first year of the Scholars program in April 2021. Posters were presented in facilitated Zoom sessions. Poster topics included community health needs assessments, interprofessional health professions research, healthcare research among the underrepresented minority (URM) population, behavioral health and addiction research, healthcare evaluation, and current issues in primary care. Regional Center and RHPP Directors served as poster judges. Prizes were awarded for seven posters:

### Superior Poster

- *A Comparative Performance of Medical Students at University of Arizona, College of Medicine - Phoenix, in Rural and Urban Clinical Rotation Sites* – Student Winner: Julia Nguyen

### Outstanding Posters

- *Safford, Arizona Community Assessment* – Student Winners: Amber Allen, Jesus “JP” Prado, Edward Ornelas, Sandra Matheny, Colby Hale, Tiffany Rogers, Christina Jones, Anyangatia Ndobegang, Teresa Curry
- *Surveying Winchester Heights: An Interprofessional Review of Resources and Social Determinants of Health* – Student Winners: Daniel Tellez, Danielle Swets, Swati Chandra, Carly Eads, Mariana Felix, Cynthia Flores, Rebeca Gonzalez, Francisco Romo

### Excellent Posters

- *Depression Management in Primary Care* – Student Winner: Rachel Heath
- *Increasing Eating Disorder Screening & Telehealth Treatment in Rural Communities* – Student Winners: Amanda Keenhold, Jessica Capps
- *Reflections on the First Year: Longitudinal Integrated Curriculum (LIC) for Medical Students in Payson, Arizona* – Student Winners: Luke Wohlford, Maryssa Spires
- *Relationship between Evidence-Based Practice Interventions and Colorectal Cancer Screening Rates* – Student Winner: Yecenia Villarreal

The conference agenda, videos, and submitted posters can be seen at: <https://azahec.uahs.arizona.edu/events/9th-annual-interprofessional-rural-health-professions-program-conference>

## Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP) University of Arizona (UArizona) College of Medicine-Tucson (COM-T)

**Carlos R. Gonzales, MD, FAAFP**

*RHPP Director, Assistant Dean, Curricular Affairs & Associate Professor, Family & Community Medicine Department*

The UArizona COM-T RHPP offers rural and urban underserved clinical rotations in family medicine, pediatrics, general surgery, internal medicine, medicine/pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, and a fourth-year elective in emergency medicine all thanks to a dedicated network of volunteer physician preceptors throughout Arizona. Students participate in community-based rotations the summer after their first year of medical school, and during their third and fourth years of medical school. COM-T RHPP students have a minimum of ten weeks of rural clinical training. The students are selected and placed in a longitudinal experience in the same location with the same preceptor, patients, and community when possible. The student gets to know the community, its benefits and attractions, and its socioeconomic, rural and/or urban underserved medical issues, while developing their clinical skills.

The COM-T RHPP admitted 28 new first-year medical students in fall 2020 from an applicant pool of 37. Combined with the second-, third- and fourth-year classes, there were a total of 111 RHPP students continuing to participate in this longitudinal program. AzaAHEC funding also allows non-RHPP students, who are interested in rural medicine and urban underserved medicine, to participate in clinical rotations in rural and underserved urban communities. During 2020-21, the RHPP supported 215 clinical rotations for RHPP and non-RHPP COM-T students. The Class of 2021 included 26 RHPP graduates, of whom 10 are remaining in Arizona for residency and 16 are entering primary care residency programs, which include psychiatry positions. Three RHPP students have elected to enter general surgery residencies.

In 2015, the UArizona COM-T Educational Policy Council approved the **Rural Health Distinction Track (RHDT)**. This expands and enhances the COM-T RHPP by ensuring that those students who are dedicated to the provision of health-care in rural Arizona can do so. They receive a Certificate of Distinction upon graduation. The RHDT requires a minimum additional experience of six weeks during their third- and/or fourth-year of medical school for a total of 16 weeks minimum, and a researched literature review Capstone paper. There were 24 students out of 26 RHPP participants in 2021 who earned the RHDT Certificate of Distinction at graduation.



Students are encouraged to get involved in interprofessional activities. The AzaAHEC Scholars Program included two UArizona COM-T students. Through rural community exposures organized by the AHEC Regional Centers, the students interact with colleagues from the other professional schools for interprofessional education activities.

UArizona COM-T is proud that many RHPP graduates now work in rural and urban underserved areas of Arizona, which contributes to the AzaAHEC mission to increase and retain the health workforce in these communities. Several RHPP graduates serve as rural preceptors, helping prepare today's medical students for future practice in underserved communities.

Our ability to recruit UArizona COM-T students to rural practice will be enhanced by the new **Primary Care Physician (PCP) Scholarship Program**, funded through an ongoing appropriation implemented in 2019 by the Arizona State Legislature. The scholarship covers the annual tuition costs of attending the UArizona COM-T and the COM-Phoenix. In exchange for receiving the tuition scholarship, the recipient is obligated to practice in an Arizona Health Professions Shortage Area (HPSA). The obligation is a year of practice in a HPSA for each year of scholarship support. Seven of the 11 recently graduated recipients of this scholarship were COM-T RHPP students. Of the COM-T 46 PCP scholarship recipients awarded to date, 16 are from the COM-T RHPP program. This total does not include the eight first year students who have not yet had an opportunity to be enrolled in the COM-T RHPP that will start in the summer after their first year of medical school.

The COM-T is planning a **Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC)** to place students in rural sites for extended periods of time where they will be exposed to the basic clerkships (family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, ob/gyn and surgery) as an integrated experience over nine months. The initial site for this project will be in the Western Arizona AHEC (Yuma/Somerton/San Luis) region.

### Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP) University of Arizona (UArizona) College of Medicine-Phoenix (COM-P)

**Jonathan Cartsonis, MD**

*RHPP Director COM-P*

Last year was unlike any other. The waves of COVID-19 forced students to face dangers and limitations, but also opportunities. Like medical students across the country, they were initially forbidden to work in clinical setting where they might be exposed to SARS-CoV-2. Rural clinical partners struggled with rising COVID-19 cases and suspended teaching as they focused on adapting to COVID-centered patient care.

Innovation in the face of crisis set the stage for other activities. Student volunteers organized PPE and food drives, delivering supplies to rural Arizona communities hit the hardest. They shifted from clinical work to public health efforts such as contact tracing, COVID testing, and COVID vaccination clinics. Rural faculty collaborated to implement a primary care telemedicine curriculum, permitting clinical training despite in person restrictions. As COVID retreated in the last two quarters of the academic year (prior to the Delta variant), rural in person rotations began to open once again.

By the end of the funding year, 53 COM-P medical students completed 77 rural rotations, an 18% increase over the previous year. When urban-underserved rotations are included, 110 students completed 174 rotations. Students learned clinical medicine with rural doctors in places like Douglas, Ft. Defiance, Flagstaff, Globe, Lake Havasu, Page, Payson, Prescott, Sacaton, San Luis, Show Low, Snowflake, and Yuma.

The experiences generated rave reviews, promoting rural/underserved practice and facilitating UArizona COM-P to extend its resources to rural communities. Examples include Point of Care Ultrasound (POCUS) training in Payson (thanks to Oscar and Elsa Mayer Family Foundation, AzaAHEC, EAHEC, and Drs. Bob Raschke and Judy Hunt). With a handheld ultrasound transducer connected to a smartphone, rural physicians, nurse practitioners, medical, and PA students acquired skills to rapidly diagnose aortic aneurysm, heart failure, kidney and gallstones, and blood clots in the legs. AzaAHEC funds supported two North Country Family Medicine Residency junior faculty joining the COM-P Faculty Development Fellowship. Finally, COM-P worked with CAAHEC to bring rural faculty development sessions via Zoom and internet-based modules. We count on positive experiences ultimately bringing more rural faculty into the teaching fold and inspiring students to take up practice in the many rural communities with critical need.

**The Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC)** is the first in the Southwest. The Payson-based program immersed three students in simultaneous clinical experiences across multiple medical specialties, facilitating the rapid acquisition of core medical skills. In March 2021, the eight-month experience ended. The curriculum structure proved flexible to adapt to the week to week changing pandemic conditions. Based on student achievement, rural faculty feedback, and community response, this inaugural year was a great success. We plan to expand LIC to additional sites next academic year.

AzaAHEC funds enabled COM-P to engage with rural teaching communities across Arizona for rural activities and clinical rotations including LIC, telemedicine, POCUS skill workshops, and the rural Faculty Development Fellowship.



*Sedona Arizona, Amanda Perkins*

## University of Arizona (UArizona) College of Pharmacy Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP)

**Elizabeth A. Hall-Lipsy, JD, MPH**

*RHPP Director and Assistant Professor of Practice*

*Director PharmD Forward Programs*

*Program Manager, Health Disparities Initiatives and  
Community Outreach*

The UArizona COP considers developing the pharmacy workforce to address the access challenges of Arizona's rural and medically underserved communities a key priority to its mission. How a state's health workforce is distributed affects access to care, particularly in rural and remote areas. Only 7% of Arizona's pharmacists practice in rural areas, yet about 15% of Arizona's population lives in rural communities. The College is working to address workforce distribution through its RHPP and Professional Certificate in Pharmacy-related Health Disparities. Both dramatically impact student exposure and decisions to practice in rural and underserved communities.

### **Students selected for the UArizona**

COP RHPP and Professional Certificate Track students are placed in rural communities during three points in their pharmacy education: (1) the summer between first and second year for a four-week introductory community or institutional rotation, (2) the summer between second and third year for a four-week introductory community or institutional rotation, and (3) during fourth year for a six-week advanced pharmacy practice rotation. With AzaAHEC funding over the last eight years, our RHPP has expanded from four to 40 student participants per year. Total RHPP participation represents about 28% of the COP Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) student body.

Despite substantial challenges in recruiting, identifying, coordinating, and conducting clinical rotations during the COVID-19 pandemic – which dramatically affected our resources, personnel, and facilities – we recruited 40 new participants from the class of 2024, who completed their first rural rotation during the summer of 2021. In 2020-21 we placed 131 students in 273 rotations, comprising almost 50,000 hours of pharmacy training in rural and urban underserved Arizona communities. All 188 RHPP students in 2020-21 are enrolled in the Professional Certificate Track, 56% are from a racial or ethnic minority, 34% are from a rural community (population of fewer than 50,000 people), and 53% are from an underserved background defined as identifying with one or more of the following: (1) first in their family to attend college, (2) received a scholarship or loan for disadvantaged students, (3) relied on federal or state assistance programs, i.e., free or reduced lunch, subsidized housing, food stamps, Medicaid; or (4) lived in

an area where there were few medical providers at a convenient distance.

To improve student retention and to provide additional structure and support to student participants, the RHPP was enhanced to include a Professional Certificate in Pharmacy-Related Health Disparities in 2010. In 2021, 31 graduating students earned the certificate, joining a total of 167 students who have successfully completed the certificate program. In addition to clinical rotations, the certificate requires two classroom-based courses taught by college faculty: Community Assessment for Pharmacy Students and Health Disparities in the United States.

As a result of the community assessment course, 204 students conducted community assessments of their RHPP rotation site communities and presented their findings orally and in written reports to their peers and colleagues. These reports were presented at the Ninth Annual Interprofessional Rural Health Professions Conference and shared with the AzaAHEC regional centers working in the communities. During rotations, students participate in community programs and events coordinated by the AzaAHEC Regional Centers, such as PharmCamp, health fairs and other outreach activities.

In May of 2021, 31 out of the 32 students from the Class of 2021 RHPP cohort received their Certificate in Pharmacy Related Health Disparities; this cohort included 13 students who successfully participated in the AzaAHEC Scholars Program. Among these graduates, eight students sought and were selected for competitive post-graduate pharmacy residencies. Seven of the residency programs that selected RHPP graduates this year serve rural or underserved populations, and all programs selected students that had completed an RHPP rotation at their site. Among the other 23 graduates, seven accepted employment at a rural Arizona pharmacy, two joined the U.S. Public Health Service Corp or Indian Health Service, three are pursuing employment through the U.S. Armed Services, five accepted positions at urban community pharmacies, one accepted employment at an urban pharmacy in a medically underserved areas, one is in the process of seeking additional education through a master's degree program, and five were undecided at the time of data collection. In a survey of these graduates, 93% reported intent to pursue employment in an underserved community and 70% plan to pursue rural employment. Employment tracking for all RHPP alumni revealed that since AzaAHEC funding was awarded, 66 (33%) are employed in a rural setting and 123 (61%) are employed treating underserved patients. The UArizona COP is especially proud to report that 50 (25%) RHPP alumni are practicing in rural Arizona, and 34 (20%) of our RHPP alumni now act as rural preceptors for our current pharmacy students.

## UArizona College of Nursing (CON) Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP)

**Christy Pacheco, DNP, FNP-BC**

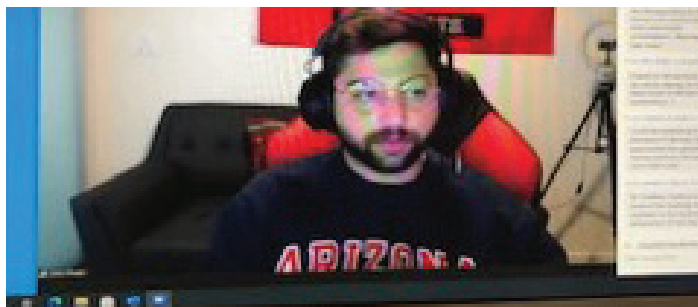
*RHPP Director and Clinical Assistant Professor*

There are persistent health disparities across Arizona, with access to care a key issue particularly among rural and medically underserved populations. Every Arizona county has a shortage of primary care providers. Nurse Practitioners provide evidence-based, primary care services with a focus on prevention, community, and population health. Students participate in a range of clinical, didactic, and immersion activities to develop expertise in working with these communities.

Fifty-five (55) Doctoral Nurse Practitioner students participated in the Rural Health Professions Program during this time, including ten who graduated. UArizona CON RHPP Scholars completed clinical and didactic requirements, including rural rotation hours, coursework, activities, and doctoral projects. Ten of these students also participated in the interprofessional and experiential learning track, the AHEC Scholars Program. Fifteen UArizona CON students participated in the AHEC Scholars-COVID Program, including contact tracing and testing.

### Clinical Education

Students completed primary care clinical rotations in rural and medically underserved areas across Arizona in FQHCs, IHS clinics and private practices. Students completed telehealth trainings, such as the ALAMOS telehealth rotation. MAT, SANE, and LARC training opportunities, led by this and other CON faculty, provided additional skills critical to improve access to care in rural and medically underserved communities. AzAHEC funding supported clinical rotations, from travel and relocation stipends to iPads and apps for clinical decision making. In 2020-21, stipend support was provided to 16 students in the Fall, 23 students in Spring, and 28 students in the Summer. In addition to their clinical training, students conducted DNP Quality Improvement Projects at clinical sites, informed by engaging site stakeholders, to improve quality or access to care.



*Doctor of Nursing Practice, Family Nurse Practitioner student Jimis Shukri shared his experiences providing COVID vaccinations to community members on the Navajo Nation, in his podium presentation *Creating Symbiosis During the COVID-19 Pandemic Through Academic Service Partnerships and Community Engagement*. As a result of this activity, he worked with GIMC staff to develop a clinical rotation, which he completed in the Summer 2021 and plans to return in the Fall.*

### Interprofessional Rural Health Professions Conference

Thirty-five UArizona CON DNP students attended the Ninth Annual Interprofessional Rural Health Professions Conference. Students developed posters focusing on health topics of interest to rural and/or medically underserved populations. Twelve students presented posters, with topics ranging from community assessments to behavioral health. Four students received awards for their posters, including Amanda Keenhold and Jessica Capps: *Increasing Eating Disorder Screening & Telehealth Treatment in Rural Communities*. Panelists shared their experiences providing COVID-19 vaccinations to community members on the Navajo Nation, in the podium presentation *Creating Symbiosis During the COVID-19 Pandemic Through Academic Service Partnerships and Community Engagement*, with Dr. Timian Godfrey.

### AHEC Scholars Program

The UArizona CON RHPP collaborated with the AHEC Regional Centers to continue the AzAHEC Scholars Program and develop and implement the new AHEC Scholars-COVID Program. Ten UArizona CON AHEC Scholars and 15 other CON students participated in these programs. Scholars participated in virtual community immersions, worked interprofessionally to develop community assessments, and proposals for community-based interventions and presented their work at the Ninth Annual Rural Health Professions Program Conference, conducting both podium and poster presentations. Two students, Jesus Prado and Edward Ornelas, received the Outstanding Poster award for their Safford, Arizona Community Assessment poster. AHEC COVID Scholars participated in community-based contact tracing and testing initiatives led by the Central Arizona AHEC (CAAHEC) Regional Center.

UArizona CON AHEC COVID Scholars, led by Dr. Renee Gregg, provided support to the Flagstaff Family Food Center, a soup kitchen in Northern Arizona which has been the site of the annual IPE RHPP Health Fair led by this director and on hold during the pandemic, creating educational materials for their staff and clients. CAAHEC supported a community-driven initiative to conduct COVID vaccinations at GIMC, led by Drs. Timian Godfrey and Lisa Kiser. Participants reported overwhelmingly the depth of learning garnered from this activity, including both cultural humility and observing social determinants of health.

The UArizona CON RHPP provides critical clinical and didactic support to Doctoral Nurse Practitioner students interested in caring for rural and medically underserved populations. AHEC Scholars develop interprofessional primary care knowledge and skills to better serve these populations, improve access to care and health outcomes, and reduce health disparities. This would not be possible without our many community partners.

### ASU Edson College of Nursing & Health Innovation Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP)

**Diane E. Nuñez, DNP, RN, ANP-BC, FNAP**

*RHPP Director; Clinical Professor, DNP Program Director*

The ASU Edson CON & Health Innovation RHPP provides clinical opportunities for primary care Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students to work in Arizona's rural and urban underserved areas. It fosters interprofessional education that stimulate and cultivate student interest in careers in underserved settings. These contribute to the AzaAHEC mission to develop a culturally competent, diverse health workforce to help reduce disparities and improve outcomes for vulnerable Arizona populations.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, activities were modified. The ASU CON RHPP offered virtual experiences in networking, outreach, community service, and social determinants of health education. This approach helps students develop knowledge and expertise in the unique challenges of working in rural and medically underserved communities and the access to care barriers these populations face. Clinical experiences for most students included long-term rotations across two to four semesters in medically underserved communities. These fostered deeper community engagement and long-term patient care continuity. In 2020-2021, the ASU RHPP supported students assigned to rural community health centers, rural private practices, Federally Qualified Community Health Centers (FQHCs), in Health Professions Shortage Areas (HPSAs) across all five AzaAHEC Regional Centers, totaling 11,350 hours of community-based training.

Clinical partners offered interprofessional student rotations for RHPP and AHEC Scholar students. The project teams designed the clinical experiences to include placement in these designated areas, with an emphasis on mentorship and quality improvement projects. The mentorship fostered positive experiences throughout the clinical experience and sustainable projects which further encourages and prepares students to practice in medically underserved areas after graduation.

Student participation in the Ninth Annual Interprofessional Rural Health Professions Conference was a huge success. Students enjoyed the interactive nature of the virtual conference, opportunities for engagement, seeing all the posters and listening to the guest presenters.

A great success this year was celebrating the completion of our second AHEC Scholars Program cohort. In our traditional program, 14 ASU students participated, representing all primary care specialty areas of practice: family, adult-geriatric,

pediatrics, women's health, and family-psychiatric mental health. They engaged interprofessionally in all five AzaAHEC Regional Centers in conjunction with students studying pharmacy, public health, and medicine. The students completed the curriculum in addition to their rigorous graduate programs, which included virtual community immersions in their assigned AHEC Regional Center, in monthly virtual seminars, and year-round teamwork to complete a community assessment and intervention project in their area.

All groups presented orally and created a poster of their community at the RHPP conference in April. One ASU student participated in the special AHEC Scholars COVID cohort. That team partnered with North Country HealthCare and their NAHEC Regional Center to provide accessible resources for healthcare providers and others involved in the COVID pandemic response. Resources included health provider self-care and mindfulness guides, staff education videos, and standard operating procedures. The interprofessional team recommended guidelines for patients who test positive for COVID-19 and developed vaccine hesitancy FAQ materials for both patients and providers. They presented at the Ninth Annual RHPP Conference on: "Aiding Healthcare Workers with COVID-19 Burnout and Vaccine Hesitancy."

A success of the project this year was providing RHPP students clinical practice experiences and virtual community immersions that fostered collaboration with the AHEC Regional Centers and community stakeholders. The project director met regularly with all the AHEC Regional Center directors, RHPP program staff and faculty mentors to address strategies to increase preceptor recruitment and retention.

The RHPP program will continue to provide clinical practice and legacy projects to best use student talent, assure completion of academic requirements, and increase the benefits to rural and underserved Arizona communities.

*"My clinical placements over the past semester have solidified my passion for working in rural and medically underserved populations. I view nurse practitioners as catalysts for change and would like to impact that change in communities that need it most. I have discovered so many intriguing gaps in rural healthcare that I have not considered before my clinical rotations. I am looking forward to learning more in future placements."*

– **Sandy, Adult-Gerontology Nurse Practitioner Student**



## Northern Arizona University (NAU) Phoenix Biomedical Campus Department of Physician Assistant (PA) Studies

**Elias Villarreal, Jr., MPAS, PA-C, DFAAPA**

*RHPP Director, NAUPA, Department Chair & Program Director, Clinical Professor*

The NAU PA RHPP aims to meet the needs of rural and medically underserved communities to reduce disparities in health status and outcomes in vulnerable Arizonans. It offers clinical experiences fostering the AzaHEC mission of recruitment, diversity, and retention of culturally competent primary care personnel. One NAU PA program goal is to prepare graduates to practice in diverse settings throughout Arizona, with special emphasis on rural communities and other underserved communities. This approach helps students develop the requisite knowledge, skills and expertise necessary to work in our rural and medically underserved areas.

The NAU PA RHPP offers opportunities for scholarship via community-based projects and supports interdisciplinary clinical experiences in rural or urban medically underserved areas. The goal is to have more PA graduates practice in these areas.

In 2020-21 the NAU PA RHPP implemented a full-scale rollout for all 48 PA students enrolled and place them across the state to care, serve, and heal Arizonans. Our entire team was dedicated to the logistics, rural and underserved placements, travel support, acquiring new clinical partners while maintaining existing partners and other tasks to accomplish our ambitious plan. Our program also doubled the number of AHEC Scholars recruited and placed from the prior inaugural year of our NAU PA RHPP.

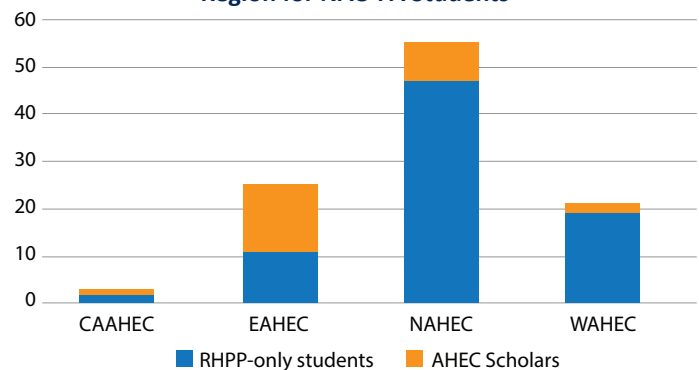
AzaHEC funding supported supervised clinical practice experiences, educational outreach, capstone project work, and professional networking opportunities among and with vulnerable populations. The NAU PA RHPP developed new and enhanced existing clinical primary care rotations allowing students to

spend a minimum of eight weeks in each discipline and a maximum of twenty-four weeks in one longitudinal experience dependent on-site availability and scheduling constraints. Our program features meet AzaHEC requirements – providing opportunities for students to experience practice challenges and the interpersonal gratification of rural and medically underserved area practice while fostering therapeutic and professional relationships between students, their patients, and health providers from a variety of disciplines.

### Highlights of the NAU Physician Assistant (PA) funding in 2020-21:

- Supported 104 NAU PA student rotations for AHEC Scholars and RHPP students
- Supported NAU PA student rotations supported in the following AzaHEC Regional Centers: CAAHEC, EAHEC, NAHEC, and WAHEC (see figure below)
- Supported rotations in Health Professions Shortage Areas, at Rural Health Clinics (RHCs), Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) or other rural sites
- Provided rotations in: surgery, women’s health, mental health, emergency medicine, elective, family medicine, internal medicine, and pediatrics

**FY 20-21 Grant Supported Rotations by AHEC Region for NAU PA Students**



## Northern Arizona University (NAU) School of Nursing (SON)

**Shelley Vaughn, DNP, FNP-BC**

*RHPP Director, Assistant Clinical Professor*

NAU SON had 34 Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) graduates. We had 10 RHPP students, two were also AzaHEC scholars. The students completed 7,723 rotation hours in rural and urban medically underserved areas. AzaHEC Scholars received stipend support for summer, fall, and spring rotations.

All NAU RHPP students attended the Ninth Annual Inter-professional Rural Health Profession Conference in April via Zoom. Our 10 RHPP students submitted posters. Rachel

Heath, NAU FNP, received an Excellent Poster Award at the conference, project title, “Depression Management in Primary Care.” This is the first year since 2007 that one of our students received an award and it was an honor.

Preceptor sites for the RHPP students included Gila Valley Clinic, Hope Family Care, North Country HealthCare in Payson, Mayo Clinic Family Medicine Arrowhead, Advanced Health & Wellness Show Low, Vitality Care Center, Ponderosa Family Care in Payson, North Country HealthCare in Springville, Banner University Medical Center Heart Institute, Affiliated Cardiologists of Arizona, Apurva Advanced Medical Care, Omni Dermatology, Kaplan Family Care, Renewed Medical Health & Beauty, and CVRMC Family Practice in Globe.

### Northern Arizona University (NAU) Physical Therapy (PT) Program - Flagstaff

**Andrea Trujillo Lerner, PT, DPT**

*RHPP Director-PT, Director of Clinical Education*

In early 2021, the NAU PT Program joined AzaAHEC with a new RHPP. The NAU PT RHPP creates a community of doctorally prepared PTs who have didactic and clinical expertise in providing care to rural and medically underserved patients.

The NAU PT Program graduated its first class in 1981. Its mission is to prepare exemplary and professionally engaged Doctors of Physical Therapy through innovative, collaborative, and experiential instruction provided by nationally recognized faculty scholars and leaders across a successful two-campus model, contributing to the achievement of health equity. One PT Program goal is to provide students with the knowledge and skills related to collaborative practice, advocacy, and the recognition of health disparities.

### UArizona Mel & Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health (MEZCOPH)

**Marc Verhougstraete, PhD, RHPP Director, Assistant Professor**

**Jennifer Peters, Academic Professional, Arizona State Office of Rural Health Program Manager**

**Mona Arora, PhD, Assistant Research Professor**

The MEZCOPH AzCRH RHPP is led by Marc Verhougstraete (Assistant Professor), Jennifer Peters (AzSORH Program Manager), and Mona Arora (Assistant Research Professor). Dr. Mona Arora joined the team in 2021 to identify new avenues for student involvement with our RHPP.

Many activities remained virtual as required by academic, community, and governmental safety advisories due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The AzCRH RHPP traditionally offered five graduate and one undergraduate-level service-learning academic (1 credit) courses, which were delivered as one-week intensive experiences. Due to safety concerns on the Navajo Nation, HPS 597B (Maternal and Child Health in Rural Settings) was not hosted in the summer of 2021. The other four courses were delivered in a newly developed seven-week, virtual format. Our RHPP held an instructional summit, supported six internships, and had 12 MEZCOPH students participate in the AzaAHEC Scholars Program.

The 2020-21 year was the first time we held our courses online over seven weeks, instead of one-week field intensive, in-person experiences. We met this challenge with our stellar community partners and experienced instructional teams. While this course format was new territory for all involved, including the students, we held true to our core

The NAU PT Program sends students to rural areas for clinical experiences. Obstacles include a lack of resources and support. The NAU PT RHPP provides stipend support for PT students that complete clinical experiences in rural and medically underserved areas and interprofessional, team-based care across Arizona. By providing student support, the hope is that their work would benefit the rural communities where they train and increase the likelihood of practicing in these areas following graduation. Five students were selected to join the NAU PT RHPP in early 2021.

Recruitment for AzaAHEC Scholars Program was initiated in early summer. This included outreach to incoming PT students with informational webinars and Q&A sessions to our Flagstaff and Phoenix Biomedical Campuses. We anticipate that nine students will be invited to participate in the AzaAHEC Scholars program for the Class of 2023 and five students will be selected for NAU RHPP from the Class of 2022.

goal: To explore and increase awareness of issues of health disparities and health equity in diverse rural and urban underserved communities. Although the pandemic prevented students from working directly with our community partners in rural, tribal, border, and urban underserved communities this year, they interacted virtually with community leaders and the AzaAHEC Regional Centers.

#### **Family and Child Health in Urban Settings HPS 597A**

**March – May 2021 | Regional AHEC partner: SEAHEC**

This course immerses our students in the assets and challenges of public health organizations in meeting the needs of children and families in a diverse urban setting. Eight students worked with public health faculty (Dr. Christina Cutshaw) and an instructional team (Jennifer Peters and Bryna Koch) to collaborate with organizations in a virtual setting to provide students foundational information and applied opportunities related to current health and social policy affecting families and children. Through the lens of Systems Thinking, students were introduced to the diverse ethnic and racial populations of Tucson through public health programs that serve families and children, and completed an environmental scanning project for Activate Tucson, and a data analysis project for the Crisis Response Network. The course additionally included the participation of community organizations in panels, dialog, and as topics for analytical reflection with students.

#### **Border Health Service-Learning Institute PHPM 597C**

**August – December 2020 | Regional AHEC partner: WAHEC, Regional Center for Border Health**

The goal of this course is to explore the role of advocacy in the intersections between public health, migration, and economics on the U.S./Mexico border. Sixteen students, public

## Rural Health Professions Programs

health faculty (Dr. Kate Ellingson and Jill de Zapien), an instructional team (Abby Lohr and Mario Trejo), and community partners completed this virtual experience focused on community health disparities and explored the role of public health advocacy in globalization, migration, and health. In place of in-person visits to border health agencies, students conducted interviews with community partners to gain an understanding of roles in the health of border communities especially during a global pandemic.

### Phoenix Urban Service Learning PHP 597F

**December 2020 – January 2021 (“Live” week of January 4 – 8, 2021) | Regional AHEC partner: CAAHEC**

This course focused on structural conditions and policies related to the unhoused population of Phoenix, and the health and social services that engage and support this community. This year there was a unique opportunity to complete this course completely remote via D2L and Zoom. Led by course instructional team (Dr. Janet Foote and Kim Barnes), students collaborated with individual and industry stakeholders and served key organizations by creating an action plan for a future partnership. Three students explored public health policy and action with state and community-based virtual programs meeting the needs of the diverse metropolitan city. Students participated in community member interviews, key informant interviews, and completed activities related to legislation tracking, advocacy, poverty and food access. The

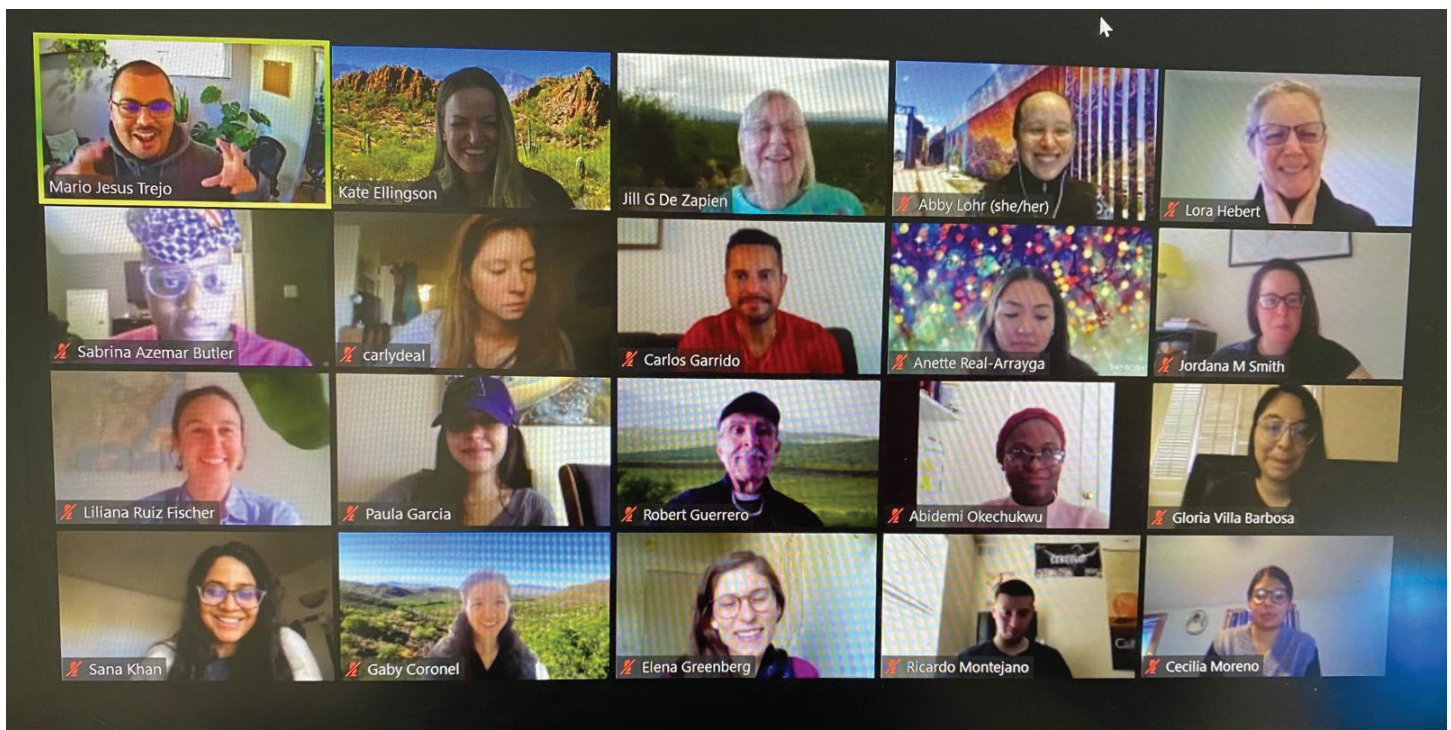
team of three students created a final deliverable of a future partnership action plan for the key organizations that can be appropriately fulfilled post-COVID.

### Rural Health Service-Learning Institute PHPM 597D March – May 2021 | Regional AHEC partner: EAHEC

Eleven graduate students and one undergraduate student, along with faculty (Dr. Marc Verhougstraete) and staff (Teresa Sosa), collaborated with community partners in Eastern Arizona. Students interacted with community leaders and discussed water and agriculture concerns, clinic and hospital resources, older adult resources and services, and explored the social and environmental impacts of local economic drivers related to social justice in rural areas. In place of in-person visits to rural communities and health agencies, students interviewed with community partners to gain an understanding of multifaceted roles in their communities especially during a global pandemic.

### MEZCOPH RHPP AHEC Scholars Program

This two-year interprofessional program provides students with community-based experiential training in rural or underserved Arizona communities. During the reporting period, the College of Public Health RHPP had eight students complete their program (cohort 2019-2021) and five students (cohort 2020-2022) settle into the second year of their program at the AzAHEC Regional Centers.



*Border Health Service Learning Institute students and faculty meet over Zoom. (December 2020). Compared to past versions of the course, 2020 was radically different. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, for the first time the class was online during the fall semester rather than one week in August. This was accomplished with stellar community partners and an experienced instructional team. While the course format was new territory, the course persevered to explore the role of advocacy in the intersections between public health, migration, and economics on the U.S./Mexico border.*

## MEZCOPH COVID 19 MOBILE HEALTH VACCINATION PROGRAM – Mobile Outreach Vaccination and Education for Underserved Populations (MOVE UP)

The UArizona Area Health Education Center (AzaHEC) Program provided financial support to the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health (MEZCOPH) for its MOVE UP initiative that provides health sciences students opportunities to participate in various roles, including registration for vaccine administration, check in, scribing, and actual administration of vaccine as vaccinators with the mobile health unit teams in Phoenix, Tucson, and rural communities.

Health professions students helped provide education, vaccination and outreach beginning in February 2021. To date, the program and students provided services in seven of Arizona's 15 counties. Even the metropolitan counties of Maricopa (Phoenix) and Pima (Tucson) are very large in land area, and have significant rural and urban underserved populations that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, morbidity and mortality.

Each county has pockets of urban underserved, rural and senior communities, migrant farmworkers, meat packing workers, dairy farm hands, essential low wage workers, and individuals experiencing homelessness. The MOVE UP initiative has focused on these hard-to-reach individuals and communities, and depends on health professions student

assistance to address these glaring COVID-19 disparities.

In addition to the AzaHEC support, partnerships with non-governmental, governmental – city, county and organizations are working collaboratively to address unmet need – including the direct effects of the pandemic, disparities in vaccination uptake, and those collateral effects related to the pandemic, such as the alarming increase in suicides, opioid overdoses, and the downward trends in childhood immunizations, screening, and primary and preventive services.

The MOVE-UP teams appreciate the support from medical, public health, pharmacy, and nursing students/faculty from their respective UArizona Health Sciences Colleges, the NAU Physician Assistant students, and many others. The initiative addresses social determinants of health for vulnerable and underrepresented communities in Central and Southern Arizona. Working with health providers, community partners, local agencies state, federal and binational partners, volunteers, and students we can and have made a substantial impact on the health of Arizona and local communities.



*Students and volunteers help to administer and scribe COVID-19 vaccine for underserved rural community in Aguila Elementary School.*

## UArizona College of Medicine-Tucson (COM-T) Department of Family and Community Medicine COVID-19 MOBILE HEALTH VACCINATION PROGRAM

Beginning in April 2021, the UArizona Mobile Health Program, in partnership with the Mobile Health Screening program from the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, provided educational training to students at 30 vaccine events in rural areas primarily in Southern Arizona. Areas Served include Douglas, Hereford, Queen Creek, Naco, Nogales, San Luis, Yuma, and Sierra Vista.

This partnership is an ideal learning opportunity for health professions students to receive hands-on training in interprofessional teams in response to a real-time public health emergency. Undergraduate and graduate trainees are from the UArizona Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Public Health and Pharmacy.

Health profession students staffed pop-up clinics that filled critical gaps in the COVID-19 vaccination efforts, providing vaccines to individuals in rural, border counties. Health profession students bolstered the efforts of local county health departments by providing more capacity on the ground to offer

additional vaccine clinics and providing evidence-based information to individuals with questions about the vaccine.

By volunteering, health professions students apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to address a public health emergency. These experiences helped students 1) gain new skills working as a member of an interprofessional team, 2) enhance their understanding of health disparities facing rural communities, 3) prepare them to be leaders in future public health emergencies, and 4) encourage them to pursue careers in medically underserved communities upon graduation. Many students volunteered repeatedly at these events, which speaks to the impact these experiences have on their training.

**▶ As of June 30, 2021, UArizona health profession students completed 223 hours providing vaccination on the two Mobile Health Units as part of Mobile Outreach Vaccination and Education for Underserved Populations (MOVE UP) initiative.**

## The “CRHWorks” Health Workforce Data System

**Bryna Koch, MPH; Susan Coates, MBA; Charles Drake, MS, MA; Daniel Derksen, MD**

The Arizona Area Health Education Center (AzaHEC) Program has funded the Arizona Health Workforce Data System (AzHWDS) project since June 2018. Since then, the Arizona Legislature passed two health workforce data collection bills (HB 2197 and SB 1096), and Governor Ducey signed them into law.

Health care systems in the U.S. and Arizona are continually transforming due to changes in population demographics, epidemiological trends, and the health workforce education infrastructure and training capacity. Timely, accurate health workforce data, analyses and reporting are necessary to understand health workforce supply and demand, respond to unmet need, reduce health outcome disparities, and improve health outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the need for federal, state and local health agencies, health care systems, administrators, providers, and policymakers to use data to inform health workforce deliberations.

### Variables influencing the health care workforce supply and demand include:

- **Supply** – health professions training program capacity in Arizona, and drawn from regional, national, and global education and training programs.
- **Demand** – by health systems, patients covered by public or private payers, self-pay and that are uninsured.
- **Distribution** – to urban and rural areas, serving Arizona’s diverse populations and communities.
- **Recruitment & Retention** – of health professionals to practice in Arizona, practice incentives and disincentives.
- **Other factors and determinants** – the aging of the population and the health workforce providers, educational attainment, socioeconomic factors, employment, income, race, and ethnicity.

## The Arizona Legislature passed HB 2197 during the 53rd 2nd regular session in 2018 which:

1. Authorizes the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to establish rules on health workforce data/database; and
2. Requires that the licensing boards begin data collection by January 2, 2020.

## The Arizona Legislature passed SB 1096 during the 54th 1st regular session in 2019 which:

1. Directs certain licensing boards to request of health providers a minimum data set starting January 2, 2021.
2. Specifies data request timing can be annual.
3. Allows board to maintain and use data.
4. Directs annual data transfer to the ADHS.
5. Stipulates data is not public record.
6. Requests funding.
7. Establishes an advisory committee.

AzaHEC funded the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH) for the third year, July 2020 to June 2021, to continue to develop the AzHWDS. The prior goals of Phase 1 were to 1) support state efforts to implement a Minimum Data Set (MDS) data collection by specified health licensing boards; and 2) leverage existing publicly available and purchased data to expand the data system and update Arizona health workforce research and reports.

In Year 3, the AzCRH team continued to focus on goal 2, leveraging existing publicly available data to build a health workforce database. The 2019 SB 1096 delayed MDS data collection by the licensing boards until January 2021. ADHS is in the rule-making process regarding the MDS. Details are located on the ADHS website: <https://www.azdhs.gov/director/administrative-counsel-rules/rules/index.php#health-professionla-workforce-data>.

To assure ready access to high quality health care for all Arizonans, health professions data can help inform policy, legislative, and regulatory interventions. HRSA recommends that states routinely collect health workforce data at the time of licensing and renewal using standard minimum data sets (MDS) to more accurately capture clinical full time equivalent capacity and meet health services demand across the state.

### CRHWorks Policy Brief examples:

#### Arizona Health Workforce Profile: Physical Therapists

The purpose of this brief is to understand the distribution of the Physical Therapist workforce in Arizona's 15 counties and compare the distribution between rural and non-rural areas.

**BACKGROUND**

- The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) states: "Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants help people to maximize their quality of life. They work with people of all ages and abilities, and in a variety of settings. They help people rehabilitate from devastating injuries, manage chronic conditions, avoid surgery and prescription drugs, and create healthy habits."
- Arizona statute defines the practice of physical therapy as "examining, evaluating and treating persons who have mechanical, physiological and developmental impairments, functional limitations and disabilities of other health and movement related conditions in order to determine a diagnosis, a prognosis and a plan of therapeutic intervention and to assess the ongoing effects of interventions."
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates the job outlook for Physical Therapists (the projected change in employment between 2019 and 2029) is 18%, which is greater than average growth outlook of 4%."

**NEED**

- The US has a growing aging population and there is an increased focus on providing support to older adults as they experience conditions like "heartins and stroke which benefits from physical therapy."
- The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) national estimates indicate that there will be a 21% increase in the supply of PTs and a 26% increase in demand. Thus, the supply should be sufficient to meet demand in 2029."
- Other research has estimated a shortage of PTs. Research by Landry et al., (2016) estimated the national demand will exceed supply by 2020. Research by Zinsmeister et al., (2016) estimated that Arizona will observe a PT shortfall in 2020 "It should be noted that this research was completed before the COVID-19 pandemic, and there has been a decline in outpatient health services, including physical therapy services since the start of the pandemic."


**EDUCATION AND LICENSING**

- Before 2015, a master's level degree was required for entry into the physical therapy field. Currently, entry in physical therapy requires a doctoral degree, Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)."
- Arizona has a process for Universal License Recognition for PTs who are licensed and in good standing in other states."

**WORK SETTINGS**

Physical therapists work in clinics, hospitals, patient homes, and nursing homes."

Physical therapists median annual pay in 2020 was \$92,000.



#### Arizona Health Workforce Profile: Critical Care

The purpose of this brief is to illustrate the distribution of the critical care infrastructure and critical care workforce in Arizona's 15 counties and compare the distribution between rural and non-rural counties.

**BACKGROUND**

- The COVID-19 pandemic strained the US hospital system infrastructure including workforce and other resources (e.g., ventilators).
- Critical care infrastructure and the ability to increase capacity are essential to a public health pandemic response."

**RURAL CRITICAL CARE CAPACITY**

- Health Care infrastructure and workforce are concentrated in metro areas."
- Populations in rural areas tend to be older. Rural communities tend to have higher poverty, unemployment, and increased mortality risk from certain health conditions."
- Some small metro counties (e.g., Yuma) and rural counties (e.g., Apache, Navajo) in Arizona have higher COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population compared to larger metro counties (e.g., Pima, Maricopa), but fewer health care resources."

**FININGS**

- Health care and critical care infrastructure and workforce are concentrated in Arizona's metro counties (May 9, 21)
- The counties with the highest COVID-19 case rates (as of March 1, 2021) per 100,000 population are smaller rural counties (Navajo, Apache, Graham Counties) with less health care and critical care infrastructure and resources.
- Across Arizona's 15 counties, 14 have critical care physicians, 13 have critical care nurses, and 10 have respiratory therapists. The ratio of providers per 100,000 population varies across counties.

**INTERIM CARE UNIT (ICU)**

"An ICU is an organized system for the provision of care to critically ill patients that provides intensive and specialized medical and nursing care."

**Interim Care Team**

The ICU or Critical Care team may include multiple healthcare and allied health professionals including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and others."

**The ADHS Surge Unit**

ADHS used the Surge Unit in April 2020. The purpose is to act as a central system to effectively manage patient care and hospital capacity by transferring patients to higher or lower levels of care as appropriate for the patient. All 15 counties have facilities participating in the Surge Unit, representing 125 hospitals, the majority of Arizona hospitals."

**ARIZONA'S CRITICAL CARE WORKFORCE—**

| Hospitals | ICU Beds | Physicians | Critical Care Nurses | Respiratory Therapists |
|-----------|----------|------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 99        | 1,533    | 1,353      | 1,275                | 268                    |

**Center for Rural Health**

### UArizona College of Medicine – Tucson (COM-T) Rural Health Residency Training Banner University Medical Center South (BUMC-S) Campus

**Sommer Aldulaimi, MD, FAAFP**

*Associate Professor, Director of Rural Health*

The mission BUMC-S COM-T Rural Health Residency Training is to train Family Medicine (FM) and Internal Medicine (IM) resident physicians to work in Arizona's rural and underserved areas. FM residents spend a minimum of 20 weeks (up from 16 last year) in rural and urban underserved training sites. The residents experience the profound professional and personal benefits of living and working in these communities. The rotations are highly valued and often cited as the reason some of our best resident applicants decide to match and train here, and why many of our graduates go on to practice in these areas, often where they rotated as a resident. Our FM and IM residency programs are grateful to the AzaAHEC Program for their continued support of resident training in rural Arizona.

During 2020-21, the COM-T BUMC-S sent first, second, and third-year FM residents for rotations in rural Arizona in family medicine, obstetrics, pediatrics, and emergency medicine. FM residents trained in the rural communities of Fort Defiance, Polacca, Safford, Tuba City, Whiteriver, Payson, Douglas, Casa Grande, Willcox, and a new site at Copper Queen Memorial Hospital in Bisbee. FM Residents also rotated in Sells, San Xavier, and Ajo for parts of their musculoskeletal and geriatrics experiences. We started a new community medicine block in Nogales where residents do border health for part of that block. FM residents completed 38 rural rotations and went to rural sites during 12 blocks.

We plan to expand our rural residency training in 2021-22 by two additional sites in Tuba City for FM and Emergency Medicine (EM), with two border health sites in EM and FM in Douglas and Bisbee, and with an OB rotation in Safford where our residents already go for FM and EM. We want to expand our rural Arizona footprint and are excited about our new rotations.

The FM residency sees a high percentage of their graduates stay to practice in Arizona's underserved and rural areas. Of FM residents who graduated in the last three years:

- 50% practice in rural areas in the U.S., 60% of whom practice in rural Arizona.
- 96% work in federally designated Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), 70% of whom practice in Arizona HPSAs.

IM residents rotated in Payson, Casa Grande, and Green Valley completing 17 rural rotations.

Each year, we work with rural health facility staff in sharing rural practice opportunities as our residents begin their search

for a permanent physician position. Because of the high percentage of our residents who practice rurally, we have had the honor of receiving the National Rural Training Track Collaboration Rural Recognition now for three of the last four years!

We share our rural residency program model, and will present virtually at an international conference (WONCA WORLD) in November 2021 on "Training and Preparing Physicians for Future Practice in Rural and Underserved Areas Globally" to an international audience of family physicians in collaboration with colleagues in the US and Malawai.

The quality of the teaching by rural preceptors is rated very highly by both IM and FM residents. We are fortunate to have amazing rural preceptors dedicated to teaching our residents.

AzaAHEC supported courses to prepare FM residents for rural practice, including Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS), Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS), Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS), Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NRP), Advanced Obstetrical Life Support (ALSO) and an introduction to medical Spanish. AzaAHEC also supported the introduction of a new "Point of Care Ultrasound (POCUS)" curriculum for the residents to help equip and prepare them for practice in low resource areas during their rural rotations and they feel competent incorporate this knowledge and skill set into their rural practice after they graduate.

The BUMC-S FM residency program has merged with our sister BUMC-T FM program and will now be called University of Arizona Family Medicine Residency. Because of the incredible mission and vision of the South Campus Program and its commitment to rural and underserved populations, the two programs will remain as separate tracks with separate match numbers, so we can continue to recruit residents and train physicians who are committed to future practice in rural and underserved sites. We will continue to provide our residents on the South Track with advanced procedural, obstetrical, and ultrasound training through AzaAHEC to expand their skills for clinical practice and will continue to send them to rural sites for 20 weeks minimum in family medicine and throughout residency for rheumatology, geriatrics, and border health.

We are developing a rural health curriculum for our South Track residents that they will participate in on the 4th Thursday of every month during the didactic time. This curriculum will include health issues for rural physicians and patients, IHS specific topics, border-health topics, wilderness and disaster medicine, POCUS, and basic public health for rural practice. We are excited about the new curriculum aimed specifically to strengthen the skills needed to practice in rural and remote



*Second year resident, Rachel Bruckman, MD, working at a rural vaccine clinic in Whiteriver, AZ.*

areas. We will continue to present and publish on training physicians for rural practice nationally and internationally.

Our FM and IM residents continue to see their rural rotations as a key element of their training. This last year was especially unique for our residents on their rural rotations since they have been rotating during a pandemic. They participated in testing and vaccine programs in the communities where they rotated, and got to learn about how contact tracing and other public health measures are implemented in rural areas. The residents went into their communities, were immersed in the rural physician role outside of the hospital and began to understand that working for the health of the community is not always in the clinic or hospital settings. Rotating at rural sites during the pandemic proved to be invaluable to their education. They were able to provide extra support to our rural sites during a difficult time.

### **Mobile Health Program Obstetrics**

AzAHEC supports part of our mobile health COVID-19 vaccination and education efforts, and our prenatal program, which provides important services for our patients and provides a great community-based learning environment for our residents. The Mobile Health Program Obstetrics (MHP OB) continues to provide prenatal, postpartum, and family planning services to uninsured patients in Tucson.

Ana Gonzales, MD; Elizabeth Kyle Meehan, MD; Nicole Person-Rennell, MD, MPH; and, Krista Sunderman, MD, supervise second-, and third-year residents that provide high quality continuity prenatal care to uninsured women throughout their pregnancies and deliveries and in the post-partum period. This year the mobile health prenatal program had 498 patient encounters, seeing a total of 94 patients. We provided an ultrasound clinic with the help of Lynn Coppola, MD, seeing an average of seven patients per session.

This program is important for the underserved women in Tucson who receive care and for FM resident education. This program teaches residents that clinical care is not the only thing that is important about being family physician - that providing services that our patients and community need during even the most difficult times - embodies the mission of our program. The residents attest to the sense of giving back to the community, providing care where it really matters, and they report a sense of fulfillment. They develop confidence as they strengthen their OB related decision-making skills in accordance with evidence-based medicine and community standards of care in a resource poor environment.

We are very proud of what we have accomplished at South Campus residency programs in conjunction with the AzAHEC Program. We continue to expand and enhance our work, and we are excited for the future. This partnership allows us to recruit, train, and graduate our resident physicians to practice in underserved and rural areas of Arizona and beyond. We look forward to our continued, successful collaborations!

### **Thoughts from current BUMC-S COM-T residents and recent graduates about their experiences:**

*“The mission of our program focuses on training full spectrum family medicine physicians through providing care for rural and underserved populations, working with the mobile OB program exemplifies this mission. As a resident, working with the program was not only enriching educationally, but helped ground me in my commitment to continue to pursue full spectrum family medicine. I am excited to continue to be a part of this program which truly embodies the impact family medicine physicians can have when they engage with their communities.”*

**– Dr. Ana Gonzales, M.D., M.P.H., Medical Director of the Mobile Health Program and a graduate of our program**

*“In Whiteriver I was able to see what full spectrum family medicine is really about. Within the same day, I would get to start out on the inpatient service seeing both adults and kids and then get called to do a delivery or do prenatal care and then go to the emergency department to do a procedure. Not only was I able to provide care in the hospital and clinic, I was able to reach out in the community and see patients in their homes when there were barriers to them coming in. What made the experience all the more special is that I was working and living within community that I was taking care of.”*

**– Paul Maler (PGY1)**

*“Being able to rotate rurally was an invaluable experience as a family medicine resident since it provided me with my first truly rural experience, and allowed me to experience the broad scope of practice one can do within this field. Growing up in a big city, I had limited experiences in rural medicine, and my rural experiences have definitely made me consider practicing rurally in my home state.”*

**– Maria Ruiz (PGY1)**

*“My time in Safford provided an unparalleled experience in rural Arizona and an understanding of the unique challenges of rural medicine. Rounding on patients in the inpatient setting in the morning, seeing longtime clinic patients during the day, and running back to the hospital for unexpected deliveries in the afternoon was the type of full spectrum care I had always envisioned providing. This experience solidifies my commitment to family medicine and practicing in a rural/underserved areas in the future.”*

**– Jessica Filon (PGY1)**

## Colorado Plateau Family & Community Medicine Residency

**Marica Martinic, MPH, NAHEC Director**

North Country HealthCare and NAHEC began planning for our family medicine (FM) residency program in 2010, with support from the AzaAHEC Program, the University of Arizona, and many other key partners. In June 2021, we completed our first year of FM resident training, led by our fearless Program Director, Ed Paul, MD. Our first year 2021-22 was very successful: all four residents excelled in their academic and professional performance, they demonstrated fantastic continuity of care, and exceeded patient volume expectations.

We started four new first-year residents in July 2021 and one new second-year resident. Three of our incoming residents are graduates of Arizona schools, including one who graduated from the North Country HealthCare training site of AT Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona (AT-SU-SOMA). Second year residents begin their rural and Native American training experiences at Tuba City Regional Health-care. It is thrilling to see the rural/underserved health career pathways materialize. We are grateful to all those who made this program happen, particularly the AzaAHEC Program, the NARBHA Institute, and the State of Arizona.

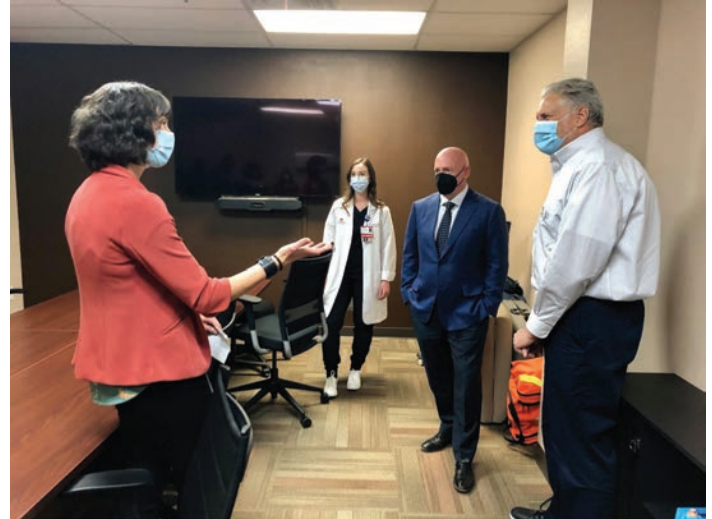
This year, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) conducted a site visit to examine our program and passed us with only one citation. This is excellent news for a new program, and we are thrilled to be in “continued accreditation” for both the FM residency program and sponsoring institution, North Country HealthCare. NCHC is the only community health center in Arizona that is the sponsoring institution for graduate medical education (GME).

We are excited to help expand GME training to other potential Teaching Health Centers in the state. Several new pathways for developing and funding residency programs have opened this year, including expanded funding for Teaching Health Center GME (THCGME) through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). We are already a THCGME grant recipient; expanded ARPA funding can catalyze expansion.

A new law passed during the 2021 Arizona legislative session makes community health centers eligible for AHCCCS residency training (Medicaid GME) funding, which previously was only available to hospital-based residency programs. These opportunities will make it easier for other FQHCs to create much needed, new community-based FM training programs.



*PGY-1 Residents and Faculty celebrate the launch of the Colorado Plateau Family & Community Medicine Residency Program.*



*Marica Martinic, Education Director; Ed Paul, MD, Residency Program Director, and Elizabeth Curtiss, MD, PGY-1 Resident provide a tour and overview of the Family & Community Medicine Residency Program to Arizona Senator Mark Kelly.*



## Med-Start Health Careers Program

**Francisco Moreno, MD**, *Associate Vice President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, UArizona Health Sciences Professor of Psychiatry, UArizona COM - Tucson*

**Lydia Kennedy, M.Ed**, *Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*

The Med-Start Health Careers Program is an academic enrichment and health careers exploration program offered in partnership with the AzaAHEC Program and AHEC Regional Centers. Since 1969, Med-Start has attracted and prepared high school juniors from rural, border, tribal, and other educationally and economically disadvantaged communities for their future careers in the health professions. Due to COVID-19, Med-Start continued in a virtual format. An important goal of Med-Start is to expand the “health professions” pipeline of diverse and culturally competent students. In 2020-21, Med-Start selected 55 students from 277 online applications. Of these, 45 were supported with AzaAHEC funding.

### On-Line College Courses

Med-Start students completed online college courses for English, Math, Chemistry, and College 101, and students received five college credits.

### Virtual Health Career Lectures and Tours

Students learned about health profession careers via lectures from health professionals via zoom. A two-hour virtual suturing session was delivered via a hybrid model, with suturing kits delivered to student homes in advance of the session. A four-hour CPR|FA training was provided remotely by the Red Cross and students received certification. Students participated in virtual tours from UArizona Health Sciences Innovation Building-Tucson, Grand Canyon University, Northern Arizo-

na University, Midwestern University, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Creighton University, and AT Still University.

### Financial Literacy

Students learned about Spending Plans, Savings, and Ways to Invest in Themselves. Under Spending Plans, students learned how to create and use a budget. The value of money and savings were emphasized by teaching how money can be used to reach financial goals.

### Community Health Project

Over the six-week program, students virtually collaborated with each other and their AzaAHEC Regional Center to develop community health projects. At the conclusion of Med-Start, students presented their regional AHEC Research projects on the following topics:

**EAHEC** – *The Effect of COVID-19 on Teen Mental Health*

**SEAHEC** – *Migration and Health*

**NAHEC** – *The Effects of Mining in Northern Arizona*

**WAHEC** – *The Effects of COVID-19 in Yuma County*

**CAAHEC** – *Social Media Campaign for COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy*

Med-Start students collaborate with their assigned AzaAHEC Regional Center communities in their reducing health disparities initiatives. Med-Start students present their Med-Start work to their high schools and assist in the recruitment of new applicants.

We are grateful for the AzaAHEC Program’s ongoing Med-Start support and guidance. We look forward to our continued partnership.



### The Border Latino and American Indian Summer Exposure to Research (BLAISER) Program

**Francisco Moreno, MD**, Associate Vice President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, UArizona Health Sciences Professor of Psychiatry, UArizona COM - Tucson

**Allison Huff MacPherson, DHEd**, Assistant Professor, Family and Community Medicine Department, UArizona COM-T

BLAISER was created in 2015 to address health disparities in Arizona's ethnically diverse, fast-growing communities. It is primarily a research-based program with goals to: expand the health professions pipeline to support future physician-scientists and health care researchers; increase awareness and promote research efforts to our underserved communities to better understand health disparities and their impact on health outcomes; attract and retain diverse students who have a strong interest in biomedical research and a desire to learn about health disparities in Southern Arizona; and encourage students to pursue graduate studies by equipping each student with the necessary skills to become a competitive graduate school applicant.

In 2020-21, BLAISER accepted 24 students from 110 applications received, of whom 85% were first-generation college students. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's program was conducted virtually.

**Students Benefits.** Each student received a \$3,000 stipend. On-campus housing was offered for non-UArizona students. Each student received six units of upper-division graded undergraduate research.

**Minorities and Border Health Disparities Lecture Series (MBHDLs).** Leading researchers and faculty experts presented lectures. Students learned about health disparities affecting Arizona, Native American nations, the U.S.-Mexico border region, and the LGBT+ population; and current efforts to address health disparities.

**Research experience.** Students were matched with leading UArizona Health Sciences scientists based on their research interest. Prior to starting their research, students were trained to understand and initiate their research projects (e.g., IRB, Responsible Conduct of Research, and HIPAA certification). Students acquired skills useful for their graduate exams and stronger graduate school applications, such as reading and interpreting research articles, critical thinking, analytical skills, writing and communication skills.

**Virtual Clinical Shadowing.** Students gained 12 hours of clinical experience during the program through eight virtual interactive clinical sessions.

**Graduate and Medical School Application Preparation.** Students learned key strategies for studying, time management, and test taking strategies.



BLAISER student, Eddie Vargas working at Miller lab, University of Arizona.

**Multiple Mini-Interview (MMI).** Students learned and practiced interviewing skills.

**Writing and Public Speaking Workshop.** Students participated in facilitated writing workshops and public speaking courses to enhance their personal statements, learn communication strategies and improve presentation and public speaking skills. They applied skills learned to create and present their research posters.

#### **Graduate and Medical School Application Processes**

**Preparation.** Students learned about the Arizona Medical School application and admission processes and alternative application pathways available, such as the Pre-Medical Admissions Pathway (P-MAP) and Pathway Scholars Program (PSP) routes. Students attended a Financial Aid Guidance presentation to learn about the financial options available for health professions education such as medical school.

**Learning Resources.** The UArizona Health Sciences Libraries provided students with guidance, resources, and tools to search for research articles to help them in their annotated bibliography, and search for articles for their research project. They learned the components to create and design a powerful research poster.

**Pre-Health Advising.** Students met and discussed their academic pathway and goals for their future careers in the health professions with a pre-health advisor. They received information, guidance, and resources to become competitive applicants to graduate school.

**AzaHEC Regional Centers presentations.** Information on support and resources for health professions students was provided by the AzaHEC Regional Centers: EAHEC, NAHEC, CAAHEC, WAHEC and SEAHEC. Students learned about cultural competency, social determinants of health, health disparities that affect Arizonans, and the shortages of health professionals in rural and underserved communities.

**Virtual research poster presentation.** The 24 BLAISER students virtually presented their research project within The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Consortium (UROC) Summer 2021 Colloquia & Poster Sessions.

## Focusing Research on the Border Area (FRONTERA)

### UArizona Health Sciences Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

**Francisco Moreno, MD**, Associate Vice President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, UArizona Health Sciences Professor of Psychiatry, UArizona COM - Tucson

**Alejandra Zapien Hidalgo, MD, MPH**, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The UArizona Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, in partnership with the AzaAHEC Program and Regional Centers, offered a virtual eight-week summer internship: Focusing Research on the Border Area (FRONTERA). Now in its 16th year, FRONTERA selected 22 students from 88 applicants in 2020-21. The program provided 17 undergraduate and five graduate students with education about preparing an application for a graduate program, with a research experience, and information about health disparities in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region.

**Faculty Mentor.** Students were matched with a faculty mentor according to the area of interest stated on their FRONTERA application. Working with faculty mentors, students developed their own short-term research projects or assisted mentors in completing key tasks or activities, like conducting literature reviews, facilitating focus groups, designing data collection instruments, or other scholarly activities, that contributed to the overall success of the research project. Due to the COVID-19 UArizona restrictions, the students worked virtually with faculty mentors.

**Learning Resources.** The UArizona Health Sciences Libraries provided students with guidance, resources, and tools to search for research articles for their annotated bibliography, and search for articles for their research project. They learned the components to create and design a powerful research poster.

**Graduate School Prep Courses.** Offered in partnership with UArizona Think Tank, students participated in the GRE Prep course and the MCAT prep course.

**Three-day Virtual Workshop on Health Disparities in Border Communities.** In partnership with Southeast Arizona AHEC Regional Center, the students attended a three-day virtual workshop about border community health disparities. Students heard presentations on Winchester Heights, a Willcox, Arizona farmworker neighborhood,

on the Indian Health Service by Dr. Brenda Martin, Chief Recruitment Officer from the Navajo Area IHS, and Mariposa Community Health Center.

**Mentoring:** FRONTERA students mentored Med-Start Health Careers Program students. They shared challenges experienced during the college application process and how to overcome them, scholarship opportunities, and motivation approaches on the journey to achieving career goals.

**Multiple Mini-Interview (MMI).** Students learned and practiced interviewing skills.

Students presented their posters and research projects to UArizona Faculty, staff, students and family members at the FRONTERA closing ceremony.

### FRONTERA Student Testimonials

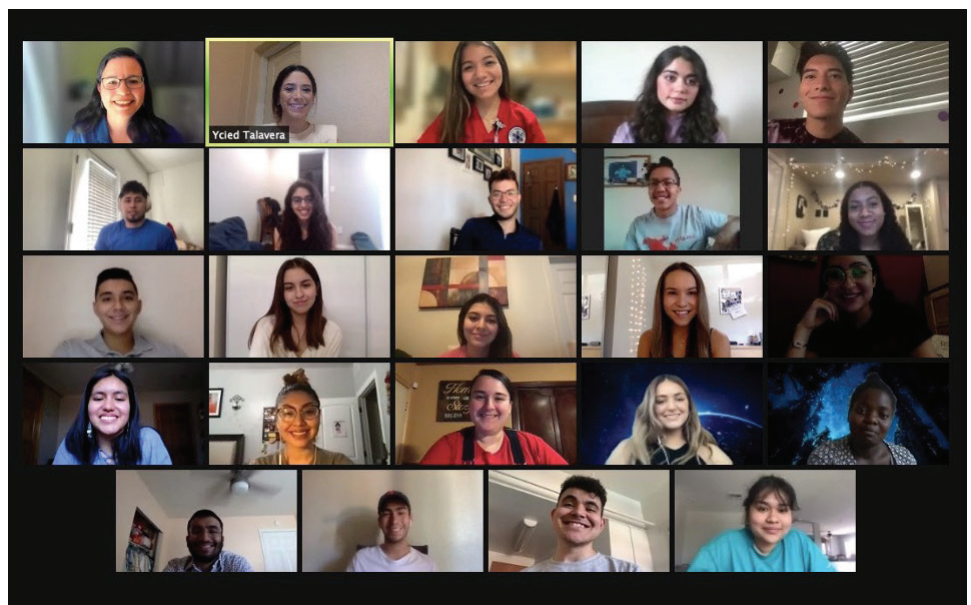
UArizona Health Sciences Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

*“FRONTERA offered many unique and amazing opportunities to us. The stipend was a great financial relief throughout the summer and allowed me to focus more time on the internship than work.”*

*“I enjoyed the Mock MMIs and thought they were the most useful workshop out of all”*

*“Overall, a fantastic program with staff that is dedicated to producing well-rounded health professionals passionate for underserved communities.”*

*“Definitely the best experience I’ve had in my undergraduate pathway!”*



First and second photo on the top left: Dr. Alejandra Zapien and Ycied Talavera, with the 2021 FRONTERA interns.

## Central Arizona Area Health Education Center (CAAHEC)

Ana Roscetti, MPH, Director

CAAHEC is based in Central Phoenix and serves underserved communities in Maricopa, West-Central Pinal, and South-Central Yavapai Counties. CAAHEC supports all aspects of the health professions pipeline, from K-12, health profession trainees (students and residents), and practicing providers.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY – CAAHEC

| TYPE OF PROGRAM                                       | PARTICIPATION |
|---|---------------|
| Health Professions Unique Trainees                    | 122           |
| Health Professions Training Experiences               | 127           |
| Health Professions Trainees Hours                     | 23,038        |
| Health Career Participants                            | 1,217         |
| Continuing Education Health Professional Participants | 2,362         |
| Community Health Education Participants               | 246           |

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges in CAAHEC’s programming as schools and clinical training sites had limited access to in-person learning for safety reasons. CAAHEC was able to adapt, navigate, and be creative in ways that reflect our commitment to supporting our learners and our partners.

### AHEC Scholars Program

CAAHEC supported 21 AHEC Scholars this year. CAAHEC facilitated two “virtual” rural community immersion events exposing our Scholars to the community of Casa Grande in Pinal County and its social determinants of health. The Fall Immersion event occurred on September 11 and 12, 2020, and the Spring Immersion occurred on February 6 and 7, 2021.

### Pathways Programs

While CAAHEC’s pipeline programs were delivered virtually due to the pandemic, we reached a total of 680 high school students through our future health professions clubs and health career exploration events. Additionally, we had successful partnerships with the UArizona, ASU, and the other AzaAHEC Regional Centers delivering summer camps, such as Future Health Leaders, Med-Start, Summer Scrubs, Health Adventure Quest, and Summer Health Institute. Virtual pipeline events explored various health careers. CAAHEC provided virtual job shadowing opportunities to club participants.



Feb 2021: One-week service-learning immersion in the Gallup Indian Medical Center with six University of Arizona College of Nursing (UACON) Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students and two UArizona CON faculty mentors.

### Community Based Education and Training (CBET)

There was ongoing demand for clinical rotations and internships during the pandemic with limited opportunities available. CAAHEC addressed internship needs by finding virtual opportunities through academic and community support. CAAHEC provided housing and mileage reimbursement for students in excessively distant rotations, and PPE and supplies. Of 127 CBETs supported this year, 23 were COVID-focused learning.

### Continuing Education (CE) and Community Health Education

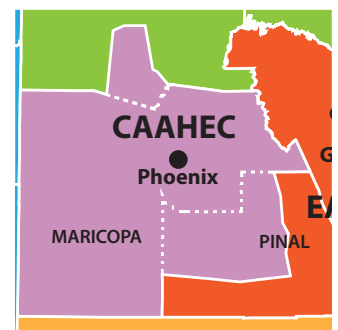
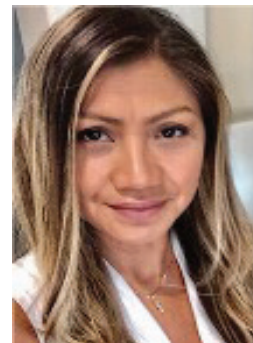
CAAHEC continued to partner with community organizations delivering 51 continuing education events reaching 2,362 health professionals, and 15 community health education events reaching 246 community members. Education topics focused on primary care, integrated health care, oral health, behavioral health, substance use, opioids, HIV, provider well-being, maternal and child health, chronic disease, recruitment and retention, quality improvement and patient safety.

### Supplemental COVID-19 AHEC Funding

CAAHEC supported several important initiatives provided with COVID-19 AzaAHEC supplemental funding. CAAHEC responded to Gallup Indian Medical Center’s (GIMC) critical need for volunteers to assist with the Navajo Nation rapidly increasing COVID rates. CAAHEC partnered with GIMC and the UArizona College of Nursing to support two service-learning immersion trips in February and April of 2021. Nine nursing students and four faculty mentors volunteered and embarked on a week-long experience at GIMC to provide primary care and COVID-related services to thousands of Navajo Nation residents. This one-of-a-kind experience created a long-lasting impact on our students.

Through partnership with the Navajo Nation’s Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment (COPE) Program, CAAHEC engaged 16 student interns and 10 GIMC case managers to assist with contact tracing. COPE delivered 51 contact tracing trainings resulting to 3,019 contacts while investigating 2,364 COVID cases.

CAAHEC’s partnership with the Maricopa County Medical Society (MCMS) supported 12 interns who helped disseminate COVID-19 vaccines points of distribution to approximately 1,300 MCMS physician members in Maricopa County.



## Eastern Arizona Area Health Education (EAHEC)

Jeri Byrne, BA, MS, *Executive Director*

EAHEC is based in Globe, Arizona and serves Graham, Greenlee, Gila, and Pinal Counties. EAHEC supports all aspects of the health professions pipeline to practice including K-12, health professions students, resident trainees, and practicing health professionals.

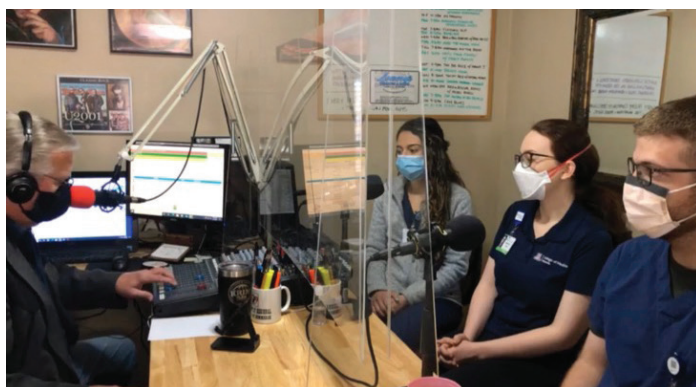
### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY – EAHEC

| TYPE OF PROGRAM                                       | PARTICIPATION |
|---|---------------|
| Health Professions Unique Trainees                    | 62            |
| Health Professions Training Experiences               | 71            |
| Health Professions Trainees Hours                     | 13,518        |
| Health Career Participants                            | 451           |
| Continuing Education Health Professional Participants | 67            |
| Community Health Education Participants               | 1,339         |

### Longitudinal Integrated Curriculum (LIC)

EAHEC was delighted to collaborate with UArizona’s College of Medicine Phoenix (COM-P) on Arizona’s first Longitudinal Integrated Curriculum (LIC) program. This eight-month program immersed medical students in simultaneous clinical experiences across multiple medical specialties. The program occurred during the third year of students’ curriculum and was available to students interested in rural medicine. The three student participants learned clinical skills and patient management in the context of continuity with patients, medical staff, and the community. The structure in this accredited curriculum provided a broad range of content while providing flexibility to follow patients longitudinally through acute episodes and transitions of care. EAHEC supported the students with housing and other resources.

This first cohort of LIC students were precepted by Dr. Judith Hunt at the Ponderosa Family Care Clinic. This new paradigm of community and competency interprofessional training was very successful for both the three students and



LIC students Luke, Celina and Maryssa on the local radio station talking about the inaugural year of the LIC Program in Payson.

the community. Patients quickly adopted the students, and trust began to grow in the community. Some patients asked for appointments specifically with their “own personalized medical student.” These students completed their LIC experiences in March 2021. A second LIC student cohort will begin in 2021-22 fiscal year.

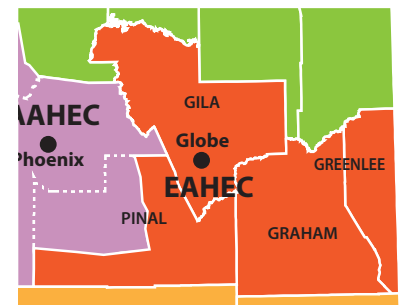
Interprofessional training is a core LIC program concept. During their rotations in the EAHEC region, Physician Assistant (PA), Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), Physical Therapy (PT), and Podiatry students all learned along with the LIC students. Weekly interprofessional didactic cases were presented, with medical residents and community health providers invited to attend. One of the highlights was the purchase of “butterfly” ultrasound machines which the students in Payson, Globe, and Safford learned to use during their clinical experience.

COVID-19 was part of everyone’s world this past year, and the EAHEC rural region required novel mass testing. Ponderosa Family Care, Mongollon Health Alliance (MHA) of Payson and the interdisciplinary students designed a drive through testing site for over 1500 local residents. Tracking the results with the Gila County Health Department, students called patients with the results and answered their questions. The Town of Payson, and MHA awarded each of the students a “Hero of Rim Country” framed certificate.

EAHEC’s efforts continues with coordination of clinical rotations for health profession students in Globe, Miami, Safford, Thatcher, Clifton, and Morenci. EAHEC supported rural students throughout the region.

### Health Career Programs

EAHEC supported 34 students in four health career clubs with a structured curriculum. Over 400 other K-12 students participated in EAHEC health career programs including flu prevention (handwashing), oral hygiene, and health career programs. Additionally, EAHEC collaborated with community partners to support 47 community health events.



## The Northern Arizona Area Health Education Center (NAHEC)

Marica Martinic, MPH, Director, NAHEC, North Country HealthCare



NAHEC is based in Flagstaff, Arizona and serves Apache, Coconino, Navajo, and Yavapai Counties. NAHEC supports all aspects of the health professions pipeline to practice including K-12, health professions students, resident trainees, and practicing health professionals.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY – NAHEC

| TYPE OF PROGRAM                                       | PARTICIPATION |
|---|---------------|
| Health Professions Unique Trainees                    | 373           |
| Health Professions Training Experiences               | 946           |
| Health Professions Trainees Hours                     | 102,109       |
| Health Career Participants                            | 201           |
| Continuing Education Health Professional Participants | 2,068         |
| Community Health Education Participants               | 317           |

As an AHEC Regional Center embedded in a Community Health Center, North Country HealthCare, we experienced the COVID-19 pandemic firsthand in so many ways over the past year. However, we are proud to say that we successfully adapted, and even expanded, many of our programs. Our Family & Community Medicine (FM) Residency Program began its second year, with expansion to eight residents. We continued the AHEC Scholars Program, conducting all immersion experiences virtually.

NAHEC supported over 900 clinical rotations for health professions students, over 100 unique continuing education activities, and graduated our eleventh year of ATSU School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona (SOMA) students from the northern Arizona partner site. Seven of eight graduates matched with primary-care-related disciplines for residency, and two will stay in Arizona including one in Flagstaff with our FM Residency Program. We continued our youth programs despite most schools meeting virtually and were able to successfully adapt to virtual models for most club programming.

### Expansion Under Pandemic Conditions

NAHEC expanded our clinical training programs from about 69,000 hours in FY19-20 to over 100,000 hours this past year, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The launch of the Colorado Plateau Family & Community Medicine Residency was only part of the picture. We also expanded our dental student training in Flagstaff and Winslow, even though clinical experiences were lacking in dental care and many dental practices were closed. We placed many nurse practitioner (NP) and physician assistant (PA) students in rural clinics where they were able to obtain the critical training they needed to complete their degrees.

### Research & Quality Improvement

Participation in research and quality improvement (QI) projects at a clinical training site is an essential part of health profes-

sions training. NAHEC took significant steps this year to expand our research and QI activities to support community-based research and student training across the region. We developed a process for project review and approval, matching students and residents with clinical research needs, and developed tools to support student projects.

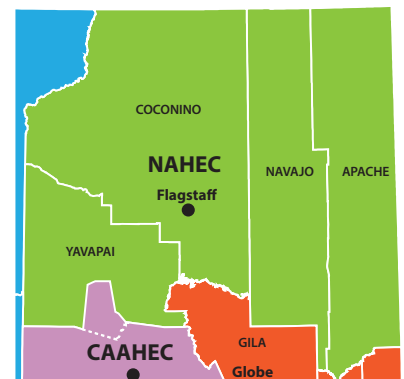
### Education Moves the Mission

NAHEC is embedded in North Country HealthCare (NCHC), a community health center serving northern Arizona from the New Mexico to the California borders. We are proud that one of the three initiatives in NCHC’s strategic plan for 2021-23 is “Education Moves the Mission,” focusing on how our CHC advances the future health workforce as an AHEC Regional Center and beyond.

There are three goals to the initiative: 1) launch the Colorado Plateau Center for Health Professions, our new name and brand; 2) expand the NARBHA Institute Family & Community Medicine Residency Program; and 3) Grow a Culture of Teaching.

The first goal transitions our name and brand to something more all-encompassing and descriptive of the breadth and depth of our programs – as the Colorado Plateau Center for Health Professions. For the second goal, we plan to expand the Family & Community Residency Program from four per year to six per year, increasing the number of graduates who practice in northern Arizona. We plan to begin one or more Rural Training Tracks (RTTs) with local partners where our residents will have more immersive experiences in rural communities for their second two years of training. We will seek osteopathic recognition for the program and launch osteopathic and obstetric training tracks. We are investigating the opportunities for a psychiatry residency program under our Sponsoring Institution.

It is an exciting time for residency training in the north! And last but not least, under the third goal of the strategic initiative, we know how important a teaching culture is to the success of all health professions training programs in community health centers and other rural training sites in the state. We will build a training and infrastructure to support clinical preceptors and other staff who make teaching possible in our clinics, and we expect these tools to expand throughout our region and beyond.



## Southeast Arizona Area Health Education Center (SEAHEC)

Gail Emrick MPH, Executive Director

SEAHEC was based in Nogales, Arizona and served communities in Cochise, Pima, and Santa Cruz Counties for the 2020-21 fiscal year. SEAHEC supported all aspects of the health professions pipeline to practice including K-12, health professions students, resident trainees, and practicing health professionals.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY – SEAHEC

| TYPE OF PROGRAM                                       | PARTICIPATION |
|---|---------------|
| Health Professions Unique Trainees                    | 140           |
| Health Professions Training Experiences               | 147           |
| Health Professions Trainees Hours                     | 20,435        |
| Health Career Participants                            | 805           |
| Continuing Education Health Professional Participants | 519           |
| Community Health Education Participants               | 5,464         |

**Future Health Leaders Adapted and Responded to COVID-19:** Future Health Leaders, our high school-based health career program, was impacted by COVID-19. During 2020-21, SEAHEC and our partner schools modified club activities to a virtual model. From recruiting online, to holding club meetings on school-approved virtual platforms, to offering on-line community projects, SEAHEC’s FHL participants were adaptable, creative, and successful. Our collaborative AzaHEC-wide summer camp had the most participation ever recorded, with the virtual model allowing for participation from a broader spectrum of the student population.

At Nogales High School, FHL students developed “Elder Care Baskets,” which included health education information on COVID, face masks, hand sanitizer, and individually written letters, letting home bound senior citizens know that their community cared about them. Students hand delivered (while wearing masks) the baskets to seniors in assisted living facilities. Illustrating such creativity, Nogales FHL, and partner agencies from Santa Cruz County, including Mariposa Community Health Center, organized a Halloween “Drive Through” education fair, enabling children to trick or treat safely, with goody bags that included COVID information, PPE, and of course, candy!

**Clinical rotations and Service-Learning Courses Adapt during the Pandemic:** Several times a year, SEAHEC hosted health professions students who came to the border to participate in community projects that provided immersive learning experiences and promoted public health in our rural communities. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, SEAHEC and our partners successfully adapted to hosting service-learning on-line. In 2020-21, we collaborated with UArizona Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity’s FRON-

TERA and BLAISER programs in a virtual format. FRONTERA students teamed up with SEAHEC staff to create on-line health resources focused on how to reduce stress, manage emotions, and practice self-care, topics very much needed during the pandemic.



In Summer 2021, as COVID continued to impact the way health professions education was offered, SEAHEC again worked closely with the FRONTERA and BLAISER Programs to assure that students would have a meaningful immersion experience. Hosting virtual panels of speakers highlighting the border health programs at the Mariposa Community Health Center and the Mexican Ministry of Health, students learned about border health issues, collaboration, and challenges faced by recently arrived migrant populations from southern Mexico, Central America and elsewhere. SEAHEC teamed up with the Catholic Community Services Casa Alitas shelter and the International Rescue Committee to provide an overview of services and programs to address migrant health and social service needs.

*“Yes, the pandemic impacted our lives and was hard on students in particular. But participating in this project (Elder Care Baskets) gave them a sense of purpose, inspiring them to feel useful in their community and the response of the elders was overwhelming. The pandemic inspired creativity in all of us.”*

– SEAHEC Program Coordinator Lupita Gonzales

The Southern Arizona Area Health Education Center (SAAHEC) became an AzaHEC Regional Center effective September 1, 2021, replacing Southeast Arizona Area Health Education Center (SEAHEC) which previously served this region. We appreciate SEAHEC for their years of collaboration in meeting the AHEC mission and wish them the best in their new focus on border health, migration, and advocacy for the most vulnerable.



## Western Arizona Area Health Education Center (WAHEC)

Joena Ezroj, M.Ed., *Director*

WAHEC is based in Somerton, Arizona, and serves Yuma, La Paz, and Mojave Counties. WAHEC is based in the Regional Center for Border Health (RCBH). WAHEC supports all aspects of the health professions pipeline to practice including K-12, health professions students, resident trainees, and practicing health professionals.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY – RCBH-WAHEC

| TYPE OF PROGRAM                                       | PARTICIPATION |
|---|---------------|
| Health Professions Unique Trainees                    | 210           |
| Health Professions Training Experiences*              | 228           |
| Health Professions Trainees Hours                     | 21,664        |
| Health Career Participants                            | 251           |
| Continuing Education Health Professional Participants | 35            |
| Community Health Education Participants               | 1,333         |

RCBH-WAHEC strives to improve the quality of life for those living along the US-Mexico border and to provide the communities of Yuma, La Paz and Mojave counties with accessible quality health professions training and affordable healthcare.

**Health Professions Programs:** Despite many pandemic challenges, WAHEC facilitated 228 field experiences for graduate, undergraduate, and technical health profession trainees with many community partners. Trainees included Medicine (allopathic MD, osteopathic DO), Physician Assistant (PA), Nurse Practitioner (NP), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Medical Office Specialist, Phlebotomy Technician, Medical Coder & Biller, Food Safety Nutrition and Food Management, Caregiving, and Informatics.

**AHEC Scholars:** The (2020-22) AzAHEC Scholars cohort spent two weekends at WAHEC virtually, during the 2020-21 academic year as part of their community immersion experience. The 2019-21 WAHEC cohort group’s podium presentation was “Skin Cancer Education” and the 2020-2022 cohort



RHPH student, Oscar Campuzano, PA NAU, advising a College of Health Careers student, CNA on the PA program application process.

group’s poster presentation was “Access to Mental Health in Yuma County.”

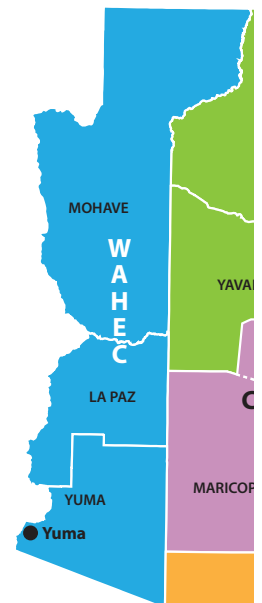
**Growing Our Own:** The RCBH College of Health Careers is accredited by Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) and is dedicated in “Growing Our Own” healthcare workforce in Western Arizona. The objective is to connect with local healthcare industries and deliver their healthcare workforce needs. RCBH-WAHEC and the College of Health Careers are affiliated with over 50 local organizations in Yuma, La Paz, and Mojave Counties where students conduct practicum experiences and clinical rotations to meet their program requirements.

**Pipeline Programs:** COVID-19 caused schools to shut down and K-12 students were limited to virtual options and time restrictions. RCBH-WAHEC has extensive high school programming, sponsoring 193 Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) clubs in Antelope Union, Kofa, Lake Havasu City, Cibola, Parker, San Luis, and Kingman High Schools. Students receive support to attend the State Leadership Conferences in Phoenix, Tucson, and the HOSA International Leadership Conference. In partnership with UArizona, RCBH-WAHEC supported eight students in the Med-Start Summer Camp program, a six-week college accredited course. Med-Start students created a community health education project, “The COVID-19 Variants.” Nineteen WAHEC students participated in the Future Health Leaders Summer program, along with students from the other four AzAHEC Regional Centers.

RCBH WAHEC provided a virtual Youth Mental Health First Aid certification training session on April 8th for 24 High School Juniors. The students received national certification as Youth Mental Health First Aiders..

**Community Education and Service:** RCBH was recognized as a National Model for COVID-19 Response by Senator Mark Kelly during his presentation at the “COVID-19 and Social Determinants of Health: Impact on the Border” Conference on May 19, 2021.

As of September 10, 2021, RCBH tested 135,696 residents in Yuma, La Paz, and Mojave counties, with a total of 16,102 positives. A total of 44,409 residents have been vaccinated for COVID-19.





**AzAHEC Financial Review for Fiscal Year 2020-21**

**Amanda Perkins, M.Ed, CPA, Assistant Finance Director, AzAHEC Program**

The AzAHEC Program earns Federal funding from Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA), Bureau of Health Professions through a competitive Model AHEC grant. It requires 1:1 matching non-federal funds. Statutory state funding is from the Arizona State Lottery for the AzAHEC Program (ARS § 5-572C) to ABOR.

The AzAHEC Program is administered through the University of Arizona Health Sciences Office of the Senior Vice Pres-

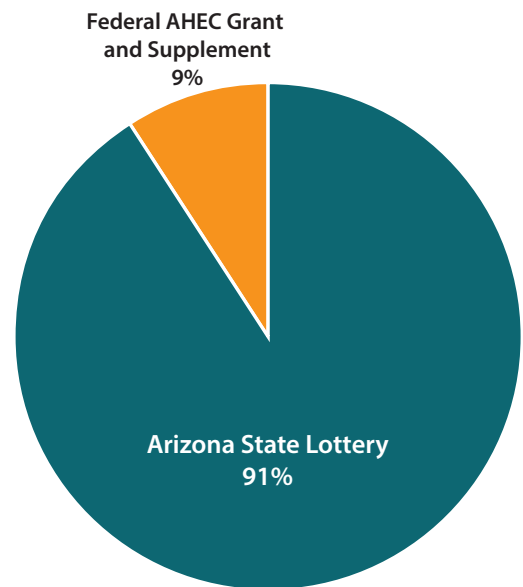
**AzAHEC Employment Data 2020-21:** Arizona AHEC Programs employ 130 people statewide, operating as important economic forces in their communities.

| Item / Initiative                                      | FTEs         | "Person Count" |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| AzAHEC Program Office                                  | 8.62         | 14             |
| CAAHEC   | 4.67         | 16             |
| EAHEC  | 4.00         | 6              |
| NAHEC  | 5.85         | 8              |
| SEAHEC   | 5.04         | 6              |
| WAHEC  | 5.25         | 8              |
| RHPP COM-PHX   | 0.61         | 4              |
| RHPP COM-TUS   | 0.55         | 3              |
| RHPP CON   | 0.50         | 5              |
| RHPP COPH  | 0.60         | 9              |
| RHPP COP   | 0.45         | 3              |
| RHPP ASU   | 0.75         | 5              |
| RHPP NAU Nursing                                       | 0.20         | 2              |
| RHPP NAU Physician Assistant                           | 0.70         | 5              |
| RHPP NAU Physical Therapy                              | 0.08         | 2              |
| Colorado Plateau Family & Community Medicine Residency | 0.43         | 1              |
| South Campus Primary Care Residencies                  | 0.25         | 4              |
| BLAISER Program  | 0.57         | 4              |
| Med-Start Program                                      | 1.26         | 14             |
| FRONTERA   | 0.45         | 2              |
| Establishing an Arizona Health Workforce Data System   | 2.42         | 3              |
| Mobile Vaccination Unit - UA COM-TUS                   | 0.60         | 2              |
| Mobile Vaccination Units - UA COPH                     | 0.57         | 4              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>44.42</b> | <b>130</b>     |

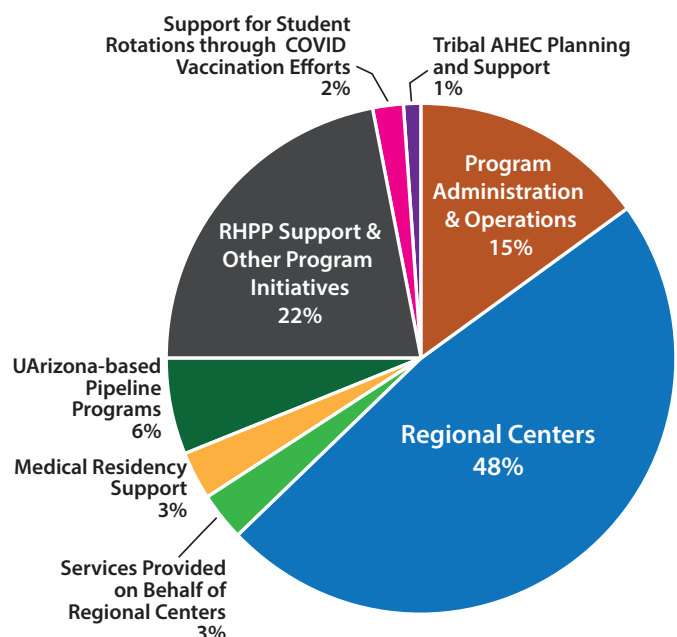
ident. From July 1, 2019 to August 9, 2020 Daniel Derksen, M.D., Associate Vice President for Health Equity, Outreach and Interprofessional Activities served as the AzAHEC Program Acting Director. As of August 10, 2020, Leila Barraza, JD, MPH, was appointed Director of the AzAHEC Program, and Daniel Derksen serves as the AzAHEC Program Senior Advisor and continues as the Principal Investigator (PI).

Federal and state funding supports AzAHEC Regional Centers (EAHEC, CAAHEC, NAHEC, SEAHEC, WAHEC) via annual subcontracts administered through the AzAHEC Program Office following University of Arizona, state, and federal requirements. AzAHEC supports the Arizona statute required Rural Health Professions Program.

**AzAHEC Funding Sources 2020-21**



**Expenditures 2020-21**



## Central Arizona AHEC (CAAHEC)

Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers  
700 E. Jefferson  
Suite 100  
Phoenix, Arizona 85034  
602-253-0090  
[www.caachc.org](http://www.caachc.org)

**Service Region:** *Maricopa County and portions of west-central Pinal and south-central Yavapai Counties*

## Eastern Arizona AHEC (EAHEC)

1600 E. Ash Street, Suite 3  
Globe, AZ 85501  
(Mailing) PO Box 572 ZIP: 85502  
928-402-8054  
<http://aheaec.org>

**Service Region:** *Gila, Graham, Greenlee Counties and portions of eastern and southern Pinal County*

## Northern Arizona AHEC (NAHEC)

c/o North Country HealthCare  
2920 North Fourth Street  
Flagstaff, AZ 86004-1816  
(Mailing) PO Box 3630, ZIP: 86003  
928-522-9855  
<https://northcountryhealthcare.org/education-research/northern-arizona-area-health-education-center-nahec/>

**Service Region:** *Apache, Coconino, Navajo Counties and eastern portions of Yavapai County*

## Southeast Arizona AHEC (SEAHEC)

1171 West Target Range Road  
Nogales, AZ 85621-2415  
520-287-4722  
[www.seahec.org](http://www.seahec.org)

**Service Region:** *Cochise, Pima, Santa Cruz Counties*

## Western Arizona AHEC (WAHEC)

Regional Center for Border Health, Inc.  
214 West Main Street  
Somerton, AZ 85350-0617  
PO Box 617  
928-276-3414  
<https://www.rcfbh.org/western-arizona-ahec.html>

**Service Region:** *La Paz, Mohave, Yuma Counties*

## Southern Arizona Area Health Education Center (SAAHEC)

became an AzaHEC Regional Center effective September 1, 2021. The SAAHEC parent organization is El Rio Health. The region incorporates Cochise, Pima, and Santa Cruz counties. SAAHEC replaces SEAHEC, which previously served this region.



## ARIZONA AHEC PROGRAM FY 2020-21

### Advisory Commission Members

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**Michael Allison**

*Native American Liaison, Arizona  
Department of Health Services Policy and  
Intergovernmental Affairs*

**Rachel Behrendt**

*Senior Vice President, Operations  
Hospice of the Valley*

**Kristina Diaz**

*Residency Program Director  
Yuma Regional Medical Center*

**Amanda Klein**

*Scientific Director  
Critical Path Institute*

**Kristen Grimes McCabe**

*Interim Infection Control Officer San Carlos  
Apache Healthcare*

**Ed Paul**

*Director, Family Medicine Residency  
Program, North Country Healthcare*

**Ronald Weinstein**

*Director, Arizona Telemedicine Program  
University of Arizona Health Sciences*

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*Board President, Central Arizona AHEC*

**David Chavez**

*Board President, Northern Arizona AHEC*

**Laura Dorrell**

*Board President, Eastern Arizona AHEC*

**Carrie Langley**

*Board President, Southeast Arizona AHEC*

**Christopher Nunez**

*Board Chair, Western Arizona AHEC*

**Leila Barraza**

*Director, AzAHEC*

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### Arizona AHEC Program

The University of Arizona

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Tucson, Arizona 85721-0425

Phone: 520-626-0265

Fax: 520-626-4037

<http://azahec.ahsc.arizona.edu>

The Arizona AHEC Program is administered through the University of Arizona (UArizona) Health Sciences Office of the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences. UArizona Health Sciences Colleges includes the College of Medicine–Tucson (COM-T), COM–Phoenix, College of Nursing, College of Pharmacy, and the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health.

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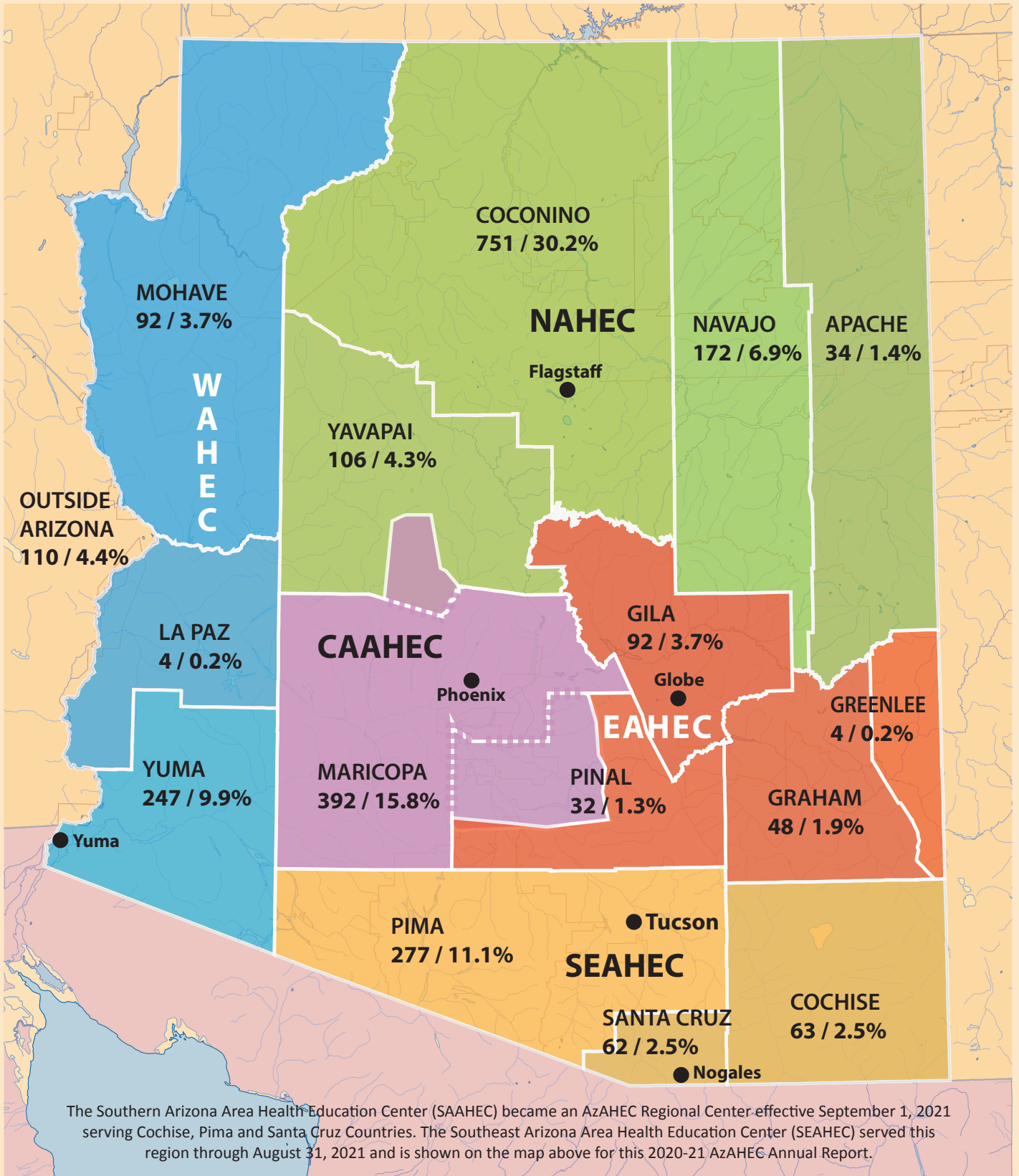
### Arizona AHEC Annual Report

*Design: Paul Akmajian, Arizona Center for Rural Health*

*Landscape photos by Ken Miller, Dan Derksen (inside front cover), Colleen Reed (page 2) & Amanda Perkins (page 9)*

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## AzaAHEC Health Professions Field Experiences by County (total 2,486)



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
**Arizona AHEC**  
 Area Health Education Centers