Wisconsin AHEC announces Brenda C. Gray, PhD, as new Program Director

MADISON - The Wisconsin Area Health Education Center (AHEC) has hired a new statewide director. Brenda C. Gray, PhD, former director of the Milwaukee AHEC (2011-2017), took the helm of the state program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health on February 13. Gray follows Nancy Sugden, the Program's director for the past 17 years.

Dr. Gray earned her baccalaureate degree in biology from Tougaloo College, M.P.H. from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Ph.D. in Urban Higher Education from Jackson State University. Dr. Gray has worked in academe for over two decades as both an administrator and faculty member. Her teaching and research interests include health equity, human development and health disparities. Dr. Gray has held faculty positions at Jackson State University and Tougaloo College. Other professional experience includes consultation in both higher education and non-profit organizations.

Remarks from Dr. Gray:

As the Director for the Wisconsin AHEC System, I want to espouse a bold vision of collaborative leadership. I believe that vision is a potent force that requires the collective power of ‘WE’. The power of ‘WE’ is more essential than ever given the economic and social climate of our nation. My vision focuses our lens on how ‘WE’ arrive at the work of the Wisconsin AHEC System. ‘WE’ are passionate about social change — in particular ‘Enhancing Health Equity’ and health care access for underserved populations. We understand that our vision, partners and community help to create social change. During the course of my tenure, ‘WE’ will use the lens of our vision, our mission, our partners and our community to strategically direct our program activities and efforts to not merely dream but to take action to enhance health equity. Through the power of ‘WE’, we are building a strong foundation to work together to achieve the vision of Enhancing Health Equity through ‘Connecting Student to Careers, Professionals to Communities, and Communities to Better to Health.’
AHEC 2017-22 grant renewal application puts emphasis on leveraging partnerships

KERI ROBBINS

MADISON - In December, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a federal agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), released the funding opportunity announcement for renewals of the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) grants, for the five-year period from 2017-2022. The announcement indicated the intention to fund up to 55 AHEC programs, the current number of federally-funded AHEC programs.

Under the leadership of Wisconsin AHEC Program Director Brenda C. Gray, PhD, staff from the program office and all of our seven regional AHEC centers came together to prepare an application. Our 80-page proposal seeks $11.8 million for the five-year period of funding.

During the development process for our application, we carefully reviewed the new HRSA requirements, which require AHEC programs to shift away from high school pipeline health career programs in favor of efforts targeted at students further along their academic path, with special emphasis on advanced students in post-bacc health professions disciplines. Starting in 2017, if funding is approved, only up to 10 percent of AHEC funds can be used for pipeline programs, such as Wisconsin AHEC’s health careers summer camps and high school outreach visits. The new HRSA requirements also restrict the funds that can be used for continuing education to less than 10% of the total award. The work plan in our proposal maintains the current breadth of longstanding AHEC activities related to the recruitment, training, and activities for high school students and continuing education events for health professionals; however, going forward, many of these activities will be coordinated collaboratively with other program partners, rather than AHEC staff independently overseeing implementation.

The future of Wisconsin AHEC will see continued expansion of medical student clinical and community-based training in rural and underserved areas. Our funding proposal emphasizes a strong focus on providing experiences for medical students, through continuation of the community engagement projects (an extension of the work AHEC conducted in collaboration with the UW SMPH Primary Care Clerkship from 2011-17).

“The future of Wisconsin AHEC will see continued expansion of medical student clinical and community-based training in rural and underserved areas.”

A significant new initiative in the HRSA requirements is the creation of an “AHEC Scholars Program.” In Wisconsin, we will engage our strategic partners to launch this program after a collaborative planning period. Each AHEC Scholars cohort of at least 105 students will be in the program for two years, and culminate in the completion of their health professions degree/certification. AHEC Scholars programming will include interprofessional training opportunities, with focus in rural or underserved areas and populations.

The shift towards more strategic partnerships will enable Wisconsin AHEC to accomplish these goals. During the application process, Wisconsin AHEC received many letters of support. During the Wisconsin AHEC renewal process. This is a summarized list and does not include all organizations.

**Educational Institutions**
- Robert N. Golden, MD and Elizabeth Petty, MD; University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
- David M. Deci, MD; UW SMPH Department of Family Medicine and Community Health
- Byron Crouse, MD; WARM Program
- Cynthia Haq, MD; TRIUMPH Program
- Jeanette Roberts, PhD, MPH; Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education (UW–Madison)
- John Meurer, MD, Ernestine Willis, MD; Medical College of Wisconsin
- Jacquelynn Arbuckle, MD FACSM; Native American Center for Health Professions
- Paul Florsheim, PhD; University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- Richard J. Dyanchand, MD, MS; University of Wisconsin-Platteville
- Kathy Loponow, MSN, RN; Wisconsin Technical College System

**Public Health Departments**
- Jeff Kindrai, MSPH, RS; Grant County Health Department
- Jen Rombalski, RN, MPH; La Crosse County Health Department
- Bevan Baker, FACHE; Milwaukee Health Department

**Public Schools**
- Alice Matthews; Cedarburg High School
- Joy Pokel; Green Bay Area Public School District
- Tina Winters; Neenah High School

**Healthcare**
- Bill Solbert; Columbia St. Mary’s
- Gregory P. Thompson, MD; Gundersen Health System
- Mari Freiberg; Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center

**State of Wisconsin**
- John Eich; Wisconsin Office of Rural Health

**United States Legislators**
- Tammy Baldwin; United States Senate
- Mark Pocan; United States Congress

**Community Organizations**
- Nancy Kraft, PhD, MS, BS; Indianhead Community Action Agency
- Amy E. Poupard; Great Lake Inter-Tribal Council, Inc.
- Erin Lee; Fight Asthma Milwaukee (FAM) Allies

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**Thank you!**

The following organizations provided Letters of Support during the Wisconsin AHEC grant renewal process. This is a summarized list and does not include all organizations.

**State of Wisconsin**
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**STATEWIDE PROGRAM**

**AHEC 2017-22 grant renewal application puts emphasis on leveraging partnerships**

**KERI ROBBINS**
Milwaukee’s Youth Health Service Corps continues success

SUZANNE LETELLIER

MILWAUKEE - This past year, Milwaukee Wisconsin AHEC’s Youth Health Service Corps (YHSC) members at the James Madison Academic Campus have been involved in many exciting health career exploration activities. Under the mentorship of two medical students from the Medical College of Wisconsin, Freddy Siller and Luciana Notardonato, the YHSC students have been learning and having fun at the same time. Five new members joined in October in addition to the seven current YHSC members.

Several of the experienced members were considered peer assistants during the new member training. Freddy and Luciana led monthly meetings where the students learned and practiced neurological testing, blood typing and suturing (the pig’s feet were a great hit!). The YHSC members also experienced two amazing field experiences at the Medical College of Wisconsin. The first was to the gross anatomy lab and the most recent trip was to the STAR center, which is a simulation lab. The year isn’t over yet and there is more fun to be had!

Youth Health Service Corps members at the Medical College of Wisconsin gross anatomy lab.

Career exploration through simulation

LAURA PETTERSEN

SCENIC RIVERS

LA CROSSE - Scenic Rivers Wisconsin AHEC and Mayo Franciscan Skemp Healthcare in La Crosse teamed up to provide a simulation based exploration of nursing and respiratory therapy careers. Students from across the region spent time assessing respirations, intubating and practicing bone drilling.

Practical skills were accompanied by investigation of each career’s educational path, job opportunities and skills and characteristics that are well suited to the work. The simulation lab at Mayo Franciscan Skemp Healthcare mimics a hospital room, while mannequins serve as patients. Students “enjoyed being able to do tasks on mannequins as if it was a real situation”.

“I feel like I may want to change my major to respiratory therapy and do more research on the career.”

These hands on experiences give students a chance to dig deeper into health careers they may be considering. One student shared, "I feel like I may want to change my major to respiratory therapy and do more research on the career.” Assisting students in making good decisions about their future educational path is one of the program’s goals.

A second program focused on physical and occupational therapy is schedule for the spring.

Read about more Scenic Rivers Wisconsin AHEC events and check out their new website at: www.scenicriversahec.org
Wisconsin Express Spring Break recap

Ladysmith site offers students Somolian focus

LADYSMITH - In March, the Ladysmith site, coordinated by Jackie Pedersen, offered seven students a chance to experience and explore healthcare issues facing rural communities with an emphasis on Somalian culture. Ladysmith was one of three Spring Break sites, including the Beloit site (12 students) and the Minocqua site (6 students). Wisconsin Express participants take part in a variety of events during the week in Ladysmith and surrounding areas. Photos by Jackie Pedersen

Cultural competency assessment planned for Wisconsin Express

NEHEMIAH CHINAVARE

Wisconsin Express is a week-long cultural immersion program for undergraduate and graduate students in Wisconsin. Participants get first-hand experience with various cultural groups, interprofessional teams, and healthcare issues at one of 11 sites throughout the state. This year, approximately 100 students (25 Spring Break participants and 75 summer participants) will be participating in WI Express, representing a variety of degree programs including: nursing, biology, public health and pharmacy.

During the summer experience, participants will complete a questionnaire intended to assess how well the program cultivates cultural awareness and cultural competence. The questionnaire has been developed by the Wisconsin AHEC program office and is based on verified survey instruments and scholarly research.

The surveys are structured in 3 parts:
• Part A: Participant demographics
• Part B: Knowledge of communities
• Part C: Situational experiences

The information gathered from this new assessment tool will be used to refine the program curriculum related to cultural humility and cultural awareness. It is our aim to strengthen the potential for Wisconsin Express to increase students’ skills in cross-cultural delivery of services as healthcare professionals, and also to illustrate the value of the immersion experience in accomplishing this goal.

AHEC grant renewal

Continued from page 2.

support and memoranda of understanding which highlighted AHEC’s current partnerships and strong base of ongoing support. Letters of support for our federal grant application came from Senator Tammy Baldwin; Wisconsin State Representative Mark Pocan; Dr. Robert Golden – Dean of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health; and many more (see sidebar on page 2). We are grateful for the continued support and encouragement to proceed in accomplishing the AHEC mission and eagerly await the response from HRSA to our application for continued funding in 2017-22.

Additional news and update:
www.ahec.wisc.edu

“Wisconsin AHEC: On Location” presents highlights of programs and people who bring teaching and learning to life in communities across the state. Suggestions for future articles are welcome; send your ideas to Jordan Gaal, AHEC statewide communications assistant (jgaal@wisc.edu).

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Wisconsin AHEC
(Area Health Education Center)

School of Medicine and Public Health
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON