

Mountain Area Health Education Center - MAHEC

Pathway Recruitment/Rural Exploration Program

The newly designed Pathway Recruitment/Rural Exploration program (PREP) Traditional grant for \$764,250 over three years will provide career preparation and opportunities for students in western NC. PREP will target high school, community college, and university students building their knowledge, confidence, and skills at various stages in their health focused educational journey. PREP is an expansion of MAHEC's reach to combat the workforce shortage in health careers, especially in western North Carolina. PREP contains many components, including implementing a Passport Program, a Passport to Healthcare Leadership Conference, enhancing MAHEC Simulation Center experiences, Summer Health Career Enrichment activities, university campus visits and tours, mentoring, and outreach activities at Health Career Fairs and Expos.

The Passport Program is designed for students to record their experiences as they participate in "health and STEM focused" activities. The program will accommodate 30 high school students from three school districts the first year, then expand to all 16 counties and accommodate 60 students in year two. Many of the PREP components are intertwined as learning activities in the Passport Program. Participation at health career days, tours of local colleges or universities, simulation trainings at MAHEC or in rural settings, or engaging with a mentor from the community college or university (who is also pursuing a health focused career and participating in the Passport Program) are some of the activities designed to promote health careers in the program.

The Passport to Healthcare Leadership Conference will be held annually. The conference will feature health career sessions, a certificate ceremony, scholarship awards and mentor recognition activities. PREP includes expanded Simulation experiences where students engage in hands-on skills and build their interest in health careers. University campus tours will be provided twice a year, with a minimum of 22 students, impacting 44+ students annually enhancing interest to attend higher education programs. PREP mentors will be recruited from community college and university students majoring in a health focused degree. Community college and university students will serve as mentors for the high school students, and twenty students will receive a \$500 annual stipend for their efforts to mentor high school students while they are earning their passport credits.