



NEWS RELEASE

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MAHEC Announces Program to Cultivate Student Interest in Health Careers

Program made possible by grant from the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation

(Asheville, North Carolina; September 2024): MAHEC—Mountain Area Health Education Center—has been awarded a grant from the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation totaling \$764,250 over a three-year period, which will be instrumental in the development and establishment of a program to cultivate interest in health profession careers among young people.

The Pathway Recruitment/Rural Exploration Program (PREP) will focus on high school, community college, and undergraduate students with activities that include:

- The Passport Program, a structured set of independent exploration opportunities
- Immersion trips to community colleges as well as local and statewide colleges
- Health career fairs and expos
- Mentorship programs for MAHEC professionals, UNC Health Sciences students, and alumni to guide community college students interested in health careers, providing insights, advice, and support

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it is projected that employment in healthcare occupations at a national level will experience more growth than in other occupations over the course of the next decade. An average of around 1.8 million openings per year are expected through 2032, and an accompanying increase in healthcare support occupation opportunities can be expected.

In addition, North Carolina is projected to become the 7th most populated state in the country within the next 10 years, which will impact the overall employment landscape as well as the need for a well-trained healthcare workforce that understands distinctive regional challenges and complexities. *(Source: N.C. Office of State Budget and Management)*

(MORE)

Mountain Area Health Education Center

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“We are grateful to the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation for this funding. The need to interest young people to consider a career in healthcare is greater than ever,” said Rachel Bemis, MSHR, SPHR, administrative director of the Center for Health Professions Education at MAHEC. “Providing pathways for Western North Carolina high school students to learn about the range of healthcare career options available to them will support their long-term financial and educational attainment and will help to address gaps in the healthcare workforce at a time of rapidly increasing need.”

“PREP aims to make a significant impact on learners by providing early exposure to healthcare careers and hands-on experience through educational activities,” said Leslie Council, CPLC, director of health careers at MAHEC. “By increasing students’ knowledge and interest in health careers, we hope to meaningfully contribute to the development of a well-trained future workforce to care for the health needs of our mountain communities.”

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About MAHEC

Established five decades ago, MAHEC—Mountain Area Health Education Center—is a leader in healthcare, education, and innovation. Headquartered on a 14-acre campus in Asheville with family medicine, ob/gyn, internal medicine, psychiatry, and dentistry offices in [various locations](#) across its 16-county Western North Carolina service area, MAHEC is one of the largest nonprofit employers in the mountain region with more than 1,000 employees.

Among MAHEC’s focus areas is recruiting, training, and retaining the workforce needed to create a healthy North Carolina, especially primary care in rural communities and those with less access to resources. MAHEC is a private, [501\(c\)3 nonprofit organization](#) celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2024. For more information, visit [mahec.net](#) and [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).

About the NC GlaxoSmithKline Foundation

The North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation is an independent self-funding 501(c)3 nonprofit organization supporting activities that help meet the educational and health needs of today’s society and future generations. Since its creation in 1986, the foundation has granted \$75.18 million to support North Carolina projects and programs that emphasize the understanding and application of science, health and education at all academic and professional levels. Visit [NCGSKFoundation.org](#).