

**Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP)
2026 Student Research Fellowship Program**

Project Description

Title: “Strengthening Health Professions Education: How AHEC Scholar Alumni Integrate Regional AHEC Learning in Their NEOMED Graduate Programs”

Location: Area Health Education Center at NEOMED (Suite G-133)

PI Name	Title	Responsibility	Contact Information
Maureen Drummond	Principal Investigator	Will be responsible for population sampling, act as a study advisor, assist in data presentation and study design.	mdrummond@neomed.edu (330) 325-6585
Rebecca Brabander	Co-Investigator	Will be responsible for study design and survey synthesis.	rjohnson4@neomed.edu (330) 325-6584

Abstract:

The Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Scholars Program provides undergraduate health professions students with enriched training focused on social determinants of health, health disparities, interprofessional teamwork, and community-based care. As an established pipeline initiative for students entering NEOMED’s health professions programs, AHEC Scholars equips participants with skills that enhance their confidence and preparedness for graduate-level education. With many alumni now enrolled in NEOMED’s medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, and graduate programs, it is important to evaluate how AHEC training has prepared them for their academic careers.

This study investigates how NEOMED AHEC Scholar alumni integrate the knowledge and skills gained from their regional AHEC Scholars experience into their current graduate programs. Using a cross-sectional, descriptive survey design, anonymous data will be collected through a Qualtrics survey distributed to eligible alumni during the 2025–2026 academic year. Findings will inform quality improvement efforts, guide the development of evaluation tools, and strengthen the alignment between AHEC Scholars programming and graduate health professions training.

Significance/Purpose:

The AHEC Scholars Program provides undergraduate health professions students with enhanced training that supports their future practice and allows them to graduate with distinction. As a pipeline initiative for students pursuing healthcare careers, the program supplements academic learning by focusing on social determinants of health, health disparities, health care delivery, policy, and the development of patient-centered, community-focused care skills.

This study will examine how NEOMED students apply the knowledge and skills gained through AHEC Scholars in their current health professions programs. It will identify which aspects of the program strengthen students’ confidence and preparedness for medical, pharmacy, dentistry, and graduate

Application submitted by: Rebecca Brabander, Department Family and Community Medicine

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education, and will guide the development of standardized evaluation practices for the AHEC program office.

Goals/Objectives:

The goal is to establish the effectiveness of the AHEC Scholar programming events and their influence on helping participants integrate into their next health professions program. The fellow will synthesize the research question, be responsible for data collection, population sampling, survey distribution and initial data analysis under the mentorship of the AHEC Assistant Director.

Primary Research Question: *How do AHEC Scholar alumni at NEOMED apply the knowledge and skills gained from their regional AHEC Scholars training to their current graduate health professions program?*

	Written Measurable Objectives
Objective 1	Assess alumni perceptions of the relevance, transferability, and overall influence of AHEC Scholars training on their confidence, preparedness, and developing professional identity in graduate health professions education.
Objective 2	Identify the specific knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through regional AHEC Scholars training that alumni recognize as valuable or influential in their current graduate programs.
Objective 3	Determine which AHEC Scholars competency areas and program components are most frequently applied in graduate-level coursework, clinical experiences, and interprofessional practice.

Research Methods:

This study uses a cross-sectional, descriptive survey design to examine how NEOMED AHEC Scholars alumni apply knowledge and skills from their regional AHEC Scholars training during their current graduate health professions program (2025–2026 academic year). Data will be collected anonymously via an online Qualtrics survey distributed to eligible alumni through their NEOMED email addresses.

Inclusion criteria: Participation in the regional AHEC Scholars program (any cohort), current matriculation in a NEOMED graduate program (medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, or other health professions) during 2025–2026, and possession of an active NEOMED email address.

Exclusion criteria: Alumni not enrolled at NEOMED during 2025–2026, or alumni without a NEOMED email.

The anticipated findings will support quality improvement of the AHEC Scholars program and inform the development of standardized evaluation measures for future cohorts. Additionally, results may strengthen the connection between AHEC Scholars and NEOMED by better preparing and encouraging students in their chosen career paths.

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Student Fellow Training/Mentoring Plan

- The student research fellow will receive training through both individual and group meetings. They will learn how to develop survey instruments in Qualtrics, including creating informed consent materials and ensuring anonymity. The student will also assist with preparing and submitting materials for IRB review. Upon completion of the study, the student will share findings with NEOMED AHEC leadership and stakeholders and prepare a brief report and poster or presentation based on the project timeline.
- Personnel will provide supervision, access to alumni lists, and guidance on IRB submission and survey development. Additional resources include past AHEC Scholar evaluation data and AHEC program databases to support survey design.
- The research will be conducted remotely through online survey distribution via NEOMED email accounts. All study materials, administrative tasks, and data management will be supported using resources within the AHEC Program Office at NEOMED.

Student Task Timeline	Spring-26	Summer-26	Fall-26
Seek IRB Approval	Assistant Director		
Identify and Codify Survey Respondents' Email Addresses			
Survey Opened - Send 1st Email Invitation for Completion of Survey			
Data Collection Continues with 2 Reminder Surveys Sent to Potential Respondents			
Survey Closed			
Data Governance / Hygiene			
Data Analysis - Descriptive Analyses; Data Visualization			
Prepare Formal Evaluation Report to Be Shared with Internal Stakeholders			
Prepare for Fall Symposium 2026			