

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Wisconsin Express

What is Wisconsin Express?

The Wisconsin Express has been offered annually for the past nine years. This program gives health professions students the opportunity to participate in an interdisciplinary immersion experience in one of Wisconsin's several diverse populations and cultures while learning about the local health care resources and challenges faced by the community.

Who participates in Wisconsin Express?

Students enrolled in a variety of health professions programs throughout the state's public and private colleges and universities are welcome. In the past students have come from physical therapy, medicine, pharmacy, nursing, nutritional science, social work, physician assistant programs and others.

Where are the communities Wisconsin Express students will visit?

Sites are located in various rural and urban medically underserved* communities around the state. They are typically clinics, community health centers, and hospitals that welcome interaction with students and appreciate the importance of increasing access to health care for the communities they serve. Each group of students has a Site Coordinator, who arranges their accommodations, plans the itinerary, and facilitates the scheduled activities.

What is the purpose of Wisconsin Express?

The purpose of Wisconsin Express is to provide health professions students a chance to see health care delivery in medically underserved and culturally diverse communities, to interact with local health care providers and community residents, and to learn in teams with other health professions students.

What can students expect to learn during the program?

Students can acquire different skills, knowledge, and attitudes, depending on their experience, goals, and interests. They learn about the variety of services available, the way interdisciplinary teams of health professionals work together, innovations practiced by professionals in areas with limited resources, etc. After participating in the program, many participants have reported feeling better prepared to make decisions about their future careers and where they might like to practice.

Who coordinates the site activities?

The Site Coordinators working with each of the participating communities will be students' primary contact persons after site assignments are completed in early April. They will plan the itinerary, and accompany groups to all activities.

* The term "medically underserved communities" is generally used to describe geographic areas and populations with inadequate access to health care services. There are several measures used to determine whether or not a community is underserved. The simplest formula is the ratio of primary care physicians to total population (e.g. 1:3500). More complex formulas incorporate other indicators of access to health care, such as the number of physicians or dentists who will accept Medicaid (a program that helps pay for medically necessary medical services for needy and low-income persons. It uses state and federal government money.), the percentage of population over age 65, the percentage of populations living on an income below the poverty level, etc. Communities designated as a Medically Underserved Area (MUA), Medically Underserved Population (MUP), or Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) are eligible for state and federal programs intended to improve access to primary health care.

What is the Wisconsin Area Health Education Center (AHEC) system?

AHEC is a statewide federal program whose mission is to improve access to primary care in medically underserved areas of the state through education of health professions students, practicing health professionals, and through collaborative efforts between academic programs and local communities. The Wisconsin AHEC system is composed of a statewide program office housed in the UW Medical School, and four private, non-profit regional centers located around the state.

How will I learn about health care delivery by visiting the community?

Every site offers a variety of activities for participants. In the past, students have:

- Participated in presentations by community members on topics specific to the location
- Visited and toured community health care facilities
- Shadowed local health care professionals
- Interacted with community representatives

When will I know the itinerary for my site?

Itineraries for your assigned site will be sent to you as soon as they are available, probably by early May. Changes in the planned itineraries, dependant on changing health care environments, are always a possibility. Going into the community with an open mind, a willingness to be flexible, and an expectation that learning opportunities will vary, will enhance the possibility of a positive experience.

When and where does the program take place?

The program begins in your assigned community Monday May 23rd and culminates in a morning workshop involving all participants, in Madison, Friday May 27th. Successful participation includes attendance in all day and evening program activities from Monday through Friday.

How much does the program cost?

Wisconsin AHEC and the host sites cover the majority of the cost of your participation. Housing accommodations (Sites have different arrangements depending on availability. In the past, housing has included shared hotel rooms, bed and breakfasts, or apartments maintained by the host organization). Workshop fees and instructional materials are also covered by AHEC. You may be responsible for some of your meals. Each site varies in availability of grocery stores, restaurants, and kitchen facilities. You will receive more details from your Site Coordinator.

How do I travel to the site?

Transportation to Madison from your assigned site will be provided by AHEC. Some participants may prefer to make their own travel arrangements. Site coordinators will discuss and confirm transportation arrangements with each student shortly after site assignments are made.

What should I wear?

Dress varies somewhat from site to site. Generally speaking, you might be most comfortable dressed as you would be in a professional clinic setting, but your Site Coordinator will provide specific information regarding what you should pack to wear for the week's activities.

If you have additional questions, contact: Mary Bumann: AHEC Program Office, 1300 University Avenue, #206 Bradley Memorial, Madison, WI 53706 mbumann@wisc.edu 608/261-1509