Wisconsin Express
May 20-25, 2012

SUMMARY REPORT

PROGRAM SITES:  Ashland • Beloit / Janesville • Green Bay • La Crosse • Milwaukee • Rhinelander/Lac du Flambeau • Rusk / Barron Counties • Sheboygan – Hmong focus • Stevens Point • Stevens Point – Amish focus
Overview

Wisconsin Express is a one-week cultural immersion experience designed to give health professions students the opportunity to study firsthand the diverse local and regional healthcare resources and challenges in one of Wisconsin’s urban or rural communities. The 2012 program offered placements at 10 sites with 75 students participating this year.

Wisconsin AHEC covers most of the cost of student participation, including workshop fees; instructional materials; shared accommodations in hotel rooms, bed and breakfasts, or lodging maintained by a community organization; and transportation during the week. Participants paid a $100 program fee and the cost of some meals.

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

The 75 students were selected from 141 applicants enrolled in a range of health professions programs across Wisconsin.

SITES

Each site group was multicultural and interprofessional in composition. Every AHEC region hosts at least one Wisconsin Express site.

- Ashland
- Beloit / Janesville
- Green Bay
- La Crosse
- Milwaukee
- Rhinelander / Lac du Flambeau
- Rusk / Barron
- Sheboygan – Hmong focus
- Stevens Point
- Stevens Point – Amish focus

Rhinelander site participants talked with Marshfield Clinic staff about local community health programs.
Program Activities

Our intention is to acquaint students with a variety of regional health care issues and provide opportunities to interact with local practitioners and recipients of health care services.

IMMERSION EXPERIENCES
The health care challenges and innovations within each site are unique, and student activities vary according to the character of the region. During summer 2012, highlights included:

- Beloit Police Department Drug and Gang Unit presentation
- Visit to Good Earth organic meat farm (affiliated with Amish co-ops)
- Meeting with a Mennonite physician
- Meeting with a doctor of Chinese medicine / acupuncture
- Tour of La Clinica, a multicultural multi-service free clinic in Wautoma
- Freedom House homeless shelter presentation; dinner with residents
- Bad River Indian Reservation clinic tour and Dancing 101 event
- Milwaukee Public Schools shadowing experience with a school nurse
- Tour of grocery store serving Hmong and Amish communities
- Domestic violence shelter tour and discussion at Bakakwsen i Shkwadem (“Door is Always Open” / Potowatomi Reservation)
- Disability awareness cook-out
- Tour of Amish school, homes, and shops; discuss Amish health care
- Participation in Salvation Army screening clinic

REFLECTION
At the end of the week, students actively reflect on their experience in journal entries. Students write responses to these questions:

1. What was your most significant or remarkable experience this week?

2. How might your experiences this week affect your future practice as a health professional?

Examples of their reflections are featured in this report (see sidebar).

“I would say that this is an experience you should not miss. I learned a lot about culture within our state. It also opened me up to a lot of experiences that I am now going to pursue on my own.”
— La Crosse participant

“I enjoyed being able to relate to what was being discussed. Meaning, if you have not lived like a person in poverty, you can’t appreciate what is like to be poor. The simulations allowed you to relate.”
— Sheboygan participant

“I learned that there are so many people that need our help in health care. We need to be more understanding and open to the kind of health care that their culture might be accustomed to but we are not. I think that I have a much more “judge-free” attitude when it comes to minorities and it will allow me to put any pre-judgment about a patient aside and treat them to the best of my ability.”
— Milwaukee participant
Site Descriptions

**ASHLAND**
*Lori Cannon, RN*
8 student participants

The Ashland site gives students the opportunity to see a wide variety of rural health care settings, including women’s health, acute care, public health, tribal clinics, and others in the Chequamegon Bay region. Students hear from a diverse group of practitioners who discuss the challenges and rewards of working in rural health in far northern Wisconsin, as well as culturally appropriate care for Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) populations. Students learn about the economics, history and unique nature of this area.

**BELOIT / JANESVILLE**
*Angela Flickinger, MPH, RD, CPT*
4 student participants

The Beloit/Janesville site offers students an opportunity to study and explore rural and urban issues related to health care and diversity in the region. Various organizations and health care disciplines offer students experiences focusing on the Hispanic, African American, uninsured/underinsured, homeless, and rural populations.

**GREEN BAY**
*Chris Vandenhouten, PhD, RN*
6 student participants

The Green Bay site offers students an opportunity to explore the diverse cultures in this area of the state, which include the Native American culture of the Oneida Nation and the Hispanic communities. Students also get first-hand experience with uninsured, underinsured, and homeless populations and spend time with health and social service providers.

**LA CROSSE**
*Robert A. Milisch, MED, RRT*
6 student participants

The La Crosse site gives students an overview of the background and health care needs of the Hmong and Amish populations in the area. Students meet with a physician who treats Amish patients, an Amish apothecary and visit Amish homes and shops. Students learn about traditional rituals from a Hmong shaman. Students participate in a community free clinic serving those with chronic illnesses who cannot afford traditional care. Students visit and participate in the activities of a homeless shelter.

**MILWAUKEE**
*Suzanne Letellier, MED*
12 student participants

At the Milwaukee site, students explore issues related to culture and health care access while interacting with a variety of health disciplines. Several community-based organizations host the team. Students interact with Milwaukee’s Hispanic, African American, and Hmong communities and those who are homeless or participating in AODA programs. Students also interact with health professionals who work with underserved populations.

“I recommend this experience to anyone who is looking to apply. The things I learned in the program are something that I had not experienced in my healthcare schooling and the exposure helped me to learn so much that I would not seek out to learn on my own.”

– Stevens Point site participant

“This is going to be one of the best weeks of your life. Make sure to fully engage in the program.”

– Beloit/Janesville site participant
Site Descriptions (continued)

**RHINELANDER / LAC DU FLAMBEAU**  
*Gail Nelson, MA*  
8 student participants

The Rhinelander/Lac du Flambeau site offers students opportunities to consider health care issues facing rural and Native American communities in the Northern Highland region of Wisconsin. Students explore key health concerns such as chronic illness, obesity, substance abuse, and domestic/sexual violence. Participants interact with professionals who experience the challenge as well as the satisfaction of serving these populations.

**RUSK / BARRON**  
*Jackie Pederson, RN, MS*  
8 student participants

NEW for 2012! The Barron and Rusk County sites offer students an immersion opportunity to explore health care issues facing rural communities with an emphasis on the Somali community. Students will visit free clinics, hospice programs, hospitals, long term care facilities, the domestic abuse shelter, public health, the Health Care Academy, the International High School and others. In addition, program participants will have an opportunity to do a service project which will improve the medical supply needs of the county’s poor and uninsured.

**SHEBOYGAN – HMONG FOCUS**  
*Jill Niemczyk, BS*  
12 student participants

Approximately 6,000 Hmong live in Sheboygan. A health needs assessment (2000) documented serious problems in health care access and health literacy in this population. The Hmong Community Center has implemented a number of unique programs addressing these needs. Along with learning about the programs, students enjoy a rich cultural experience gaining first-hand knowledge of Hmong history, culture and traditional health beliefs.

**STEVENS POINT**  
*Jasia Steinmetz, PhD, RD*  
5 student participants

The Stevens Point site offers students a variety of experiences designed to illustrate the health care needs of low income, Hmong, Native American, and Hispanic residents of Stevens Point and surrounding rural communities. Students explore services that are available in Central Wisconsin including a free health clinic serving low income, uninsured and migrant populations, and a shelter where students learn about aspects of shelter operation.

**STEVENS POINT – AMISH FOCUS**  
*Kristen Lucas, MS*  
6 student participants

The Stevens Point–Amish site offers students opportunities to learn about Amish culture and rural health care practice. Central Wisconsin has a significant Amish and Mennonite population in four counties. Students visit families, businesses, public agencies, and health care providers in Amish/Mennonite communities to explore how respect for culture can interact with state-of-the-art health care. They learn about the balance between cost of medical care and reduction of risk.

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“I understood that Milwaukee has lots of culture, that many individuals experience homelessness, that there was drug and alcohol problems — but this experience immersed me and really exposed me first hand to the issues. Wisconsin Express definitely put these issues right in front of me and gave me the opportunity to better understand them by talking with individuals and hearing from professionals that work in the area.”

— Milwaukee site participant

“I would encourage everyone to apply to this program. It is super fun and informational. The experience is a once in a lifetime opportunity that will change the way you look at health care.”

— Stevens Point site participant

“Listening to people’s stories and hearing first hand how they were living with the underprivileged situation that they were in. It changed my perception of certain groups of people when an actual person was sitting there interacting with me and allowing me into their lives rather than just hearing the statistics.”

— Milwaukee site participant

“Wisconsin Express will open your eyes to the beauty that diversity has to offer. It will make you more aware of health care career paths that you can take. It will make you more aware of who you are and the steps you have to take to be the person you want to be.”

— Rusk/Barron site participant
Wisconsin Express is a Wisconsin AHEC program.

Join us next year!

**2013 WISCONSIN EXPRESS**

Sun. May 19 – Fri. May 24

Applications available online beginning in December 2012:
[www.ahec.wisc.edu](http://www.ahec.wisc.edu)

Applications due:
Friday, February 15, 2013

Early applications encouraged!

For more information, contact:

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About Wisconsin AHEC

The Wisconsin Area Health Education Center (AHEC) program is a health professions education and outreach program supported by the State of Wisconsin, federal grants, the state’s health professions training programs, and local communities. It is part of a nationwide network of programs for improving accessibility and quality of primary health care. The national program was designed to encourage universities and educators to look beyond their institutions to form partnerships that meet community health needs, working toward the goal of decentralizing health professions training and linking communities with academic health centers in partnerships to promote cooperative solutions to local health problems.

The Wisconsin AHEC System consists of seven regional centers located in Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Madison, Cashton, Wausau, Superior, and Marinette. Each center operates under the direction of its own governing board. A statewide program, located in the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, administers state and federal contracts to the centers and maintains several statewide programs. Representatives from the seven centers, health professions programs and community at-large members all come together in a 22 member statewide board that meets quarterly to set overall program objectives and review progress.

Wisconsin AHEC programs serve all the health professions programs in the state. Over the last 20 years, project partnerships have included (in addition to the two medical schools) over 20 BSN nursing programs, eight advanced degree nursing programs, three physician assistant programs, three social work programs, the UW School of Pharmacy, the MPH programs, and a range of allied health and preprofessional programs at the 13 UW System campuses, 21 private colleges, two tribal colleges and 13 UW System two-year campuses.

Wisconsin AHEC Centers collaborate regionally with the Wisconsin Technical College System (16 colleges with 47 campuses and numerous outreach centers) particularly the campuses offering associate degree nursing programs and a variety of other health professions technical training programs. Wisconsin AHEC has also worked with family practice residencies sponsored by the UW SMPH, Medical College of Wisconsin and La Crosse-Mayo programs, with a particular focus on the rural training track programs.

Regional centers provide a range of programs and services in their regions. Program areas include the following:

- Enhancing the learning experience for all health professions students at community-based sites, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary programs, developing cultural effectiveness, and technology support;
- Supporting health careers recruitment program in underserved rural and urban areas, to assist high school and college students from underrepresented populations prepare for entry into health professions schools;
- Supporting faculty mentors and preceptors at community-based training sites with continuing education, technology support and other services to enhance the practice environment and maximize the ability of health professionals in underserved communities to provide high quality health care; and
- Partnering with local organizations in a variety of outreach activities to improve the health of the community.

Wisconsin Express

Wisconsin AHEC

Wisconsin Technical College System

School of Medicine and Public Health
University of Wisconsin-Madison