



July 2017

From: Missouri Area Health Education Centers

Rural Immersion Project- Chillicothe, Missouri- July 10-13, 2017

The Rural Immersion Program was a four-day experience for health professions students who are interested in living and working in a rural area. This non-clinical experience was designed to highlight the social and communal aspects of rural life. Through group activities and meetings with community leaders, participants got a preview of life as a rural healthcare professional and experienced working with other healthcare professions in a collaborative environment.

The 19 students were from the MU School of Medicine, MU School of Nursing, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, St. Louis University School of Medicine, UMKC School of Pharmacy at MU, ATSU Missouri School of Dentistry and Oral Health, and Missouri Western State University. They were from small communities like Wooldridge, Wellington, Stanberry, and Canton, and larger communities such as St. Joseph and Columbia. One student commented that while she was from a rural community, she hadn't thought about what it would be like to practice in a rural community.

Students broke into groups to foster a diversity of thought and experience to interview community leaders from one of the four emphasis areas (business and government, education, healthcare, and natural resources). At the end of the experience, students presented their findings to the other student groups and members of the community.

The community of Chillicothe invested much time in these students. An estimated 80 members of the community welcomed them into Chillicothe and made certain they learned all aspects of rural community life. Thank you to Mayor Chuck Haney for his welcome and including the students in his weekly radio show. In addition to the time spent interviewing in their groups, the students learned the history of Chillicothe through a scavenger hunt around a few of the many murals, attended a local baseball game, had dinner with young professionals (hosted by former AHEC participant Emily McCoy Mattingly, DDS and her husband, also a dentist), participated in a Poverty Simulation and a meeting of the Community Wellness Committee, learned about public safety from the Fire Department, toured Hedrick Medical Center, were treated to meals at local restaurants, and much more.

Missouri AHEC hopes to expand this pilot project to other regions in the future.



Rural Immersion participants posed prior to final presentation to the community

MAHEC is a partnership of seven locally-governed organizations and three university-based health professions education programs working statewide to increase the numbers of Missouri youth entering stable, high-paying jobs as healthcare professionals and the numbers of professionals caring for underserved populations.

The MAHEC partners include:

- A.T. Still University –
 - Kirksville
- University of Missouri –
 - Columbia
- Saint Louis University
- Northeast Missouri AHEC -Kirksville
- Northwest Missouri AHEC
 - St. Joseph
- West Central Missouri
 - AHEC – Lexington
- Mid-Missouri AHEC – Rolla
- East Central Missouri AHEC– St. Louis
- Southeastern Missouri AHEC – Poplar Bluff
- Southwest Missouri AHEC
 - Springfield

MAHEC: Connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health