Healthcare Interest Program
Curriculum

Background:

The Healthcare Interest Program (HIP) is a mentorship program for students at the University of Colorado, Denver (UCD) who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are interested in healthcare careers.

Health disparities present a formidable challenge nationwide and especially in Denver County. The goal of this program is to empower undergraduate students at the University of Colorado, Denver who often come from similar socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds as many of the patients at Denver Health (DH), to succeed in their education and address these healthcare inequities by pursuing a healthcare career. The long-term goal of this mentorship program is to recruit and attract these students to the University of Colorado post-graduate healthcare schools, thereby increasing diversity in our healthcare workforce and motivating the students to work with patients in underserved areas including Denver Health.

Objectives:

1) Provide a clinical physician mentor for each student who can offer advice and could provide a letter of recommendation for applications to subsequent healthcare training program. We hope that the mentor can help empower the student and expand the student’s perception of what he/she can accomplish.

2) Diversify our healthcare workforce, thereby improving access to care and reducing health disparities. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to choose to work in underserved areas and are also more likely to choose primary care specialties.

3) Help students solidify their healthcare career goals by exposing them to a variety of healthcare professionals at DH including: physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists and social workers.

4) Demonstrate to students how undergraduate course work connects to day-to-day health care with the “Books-to-Bedside” lectures.

5) Educate students from disadvantaged backgrounds about health disparities and the need for leadership in future policy making.

6) Enhance cultural competence at Denver Health. Faculty will be exposed to different perspectives and cultural backgrounds that may broaden their interpersonal skills and help their interactions with patients.
Implementation:

HIP is a 10-month program that spans the academic undergraduate year. All meetings will take place over one Friday each month. The following is the proposed curriculum:

1) Didactic training of mentors in mentoring and cultural sensitivity.

2) Mentoring - Students meet at least one half-day per month with their healthcare mentor to talk about healthcare, discuss life matters, engage in general career guidance, or learn academic tips and strategies on how to succeed in their undergraduate education.

3) Clinical Experience - Students will shadow their healthcare mentor and/or other selected healthcare workers or administrators one to two half-days per month at Denver Health. This will provide them with the clinical hours required by many healthcare schools and give them the opportunity to experience various healthcare career choices.

4) “Books-to-Bedside” lectures - The students and their mentors will meet one Friday per month at DH to attend a 1-hour lecture that connects undergraduate science coursework with real-world healthcare topics. Example lectures include:
   a) Microbiology and the History of Antibiotics
   b) Physics of Blood Pressure and electrocardiograms
   c) Biochemistry of alcohol intoxication
   d) Biochemistry of Diabetic Ketoacidosis


6) Diversity lectures – Three speakers per term, each discussing different aspects of diversity training and health disparities research being conducted in the Denver metropolitan area. These lectures will be opened up to the entire Denver Health physician workforce.

7) Reflection essay - The student will keep an ongoing journal of their clinical experiences and toward the end of the course, will write an essay reflecting on their experiences in the hospital.

8) Three socials per year - Kick off, winter, and end-of-year gathering.

9) Evaluations: Likert-scale surveys administered twice per year to formally track student and program success.
10) Follow-up. Annual contact with all course graduates to track career progress.