

**“We are developing a new model of health care in which people have access to a team of primary care providers, pharmacists, public health professionals, dentists and nurses all working on the same campus alongside researchers — all committed to addressing our region’s unique rural health needs.”**

— **JEFFERY E. HECK, M.D.**

CEO, MAHEC and UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC  
Associate Dean, UNC School of Medicine Asheville Campus



**Transforming  
Health Care  
IN WESTERN  
NORTH CAROLINA**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

**Lizzie McKenna Cozart**

[lizzie.cozart@unc.edu](mailto:lizzie.cozart@unc.edu) | [lizzie.cozart@mahec.net](mailto:lizzie.cozart@mahec.net)

828.273.8226

# AN INTERPROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC HEALTH CENTER

The Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) was established in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1974, with a clear mandate to improve health across Western North Carolina while creating a robust and well-qualified health care workforce.

In 2017, MAHEC and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill expanded their partnership through UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC. This academic health center is addressing Western North Carolina's biggest health care challenges by leveraging community partnerships, MAHEC's national expertise in interprofessional care, and UNC-Chapel Hill's world-class research and educational excellence.

**“In expanding our health sciences education and research programs, we are better equipped to meet the health care workforce needs of today and the challenges of tomorrow.”**

— Robert Blouin,  
Executive Vice Chancellor and  
Provost, UNC-Chapel Hill



## UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC

### A REGIONAL HUB FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONS TRAINING

- UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, the #1 *public* school of public health in the country
- UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, the #1 school of pharmacy in the nation
- UNC School of Medicine, ranked #1 in primary care
- UNC Adams School of Dentistry, #2 dental school *globally*

### IMPROVING ACCESS TO CARE

- Placing dental, medicine, pharmacy and public health students in long-term internships across the region
- Encouraging learners to train with rural professionals
- Recruiting, training and retaining health care professionals in Western North Carolina

# OUR PURPOSE

Designed to transform health care in Western North Carolina, UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC brings together students, faculty and staff from UNC's schools of dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and public health, creating unprecedented opportunities for interprofessional training, research, collaboration and innovation in health care. Along with a commitment to invest in every North Carolina county, UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC's work aligns with the University's mandate to "Serve to Benefit Society," a pillar of Carolina Next: Innovations for Public Good.

# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

## EDUCATION

UNC-Chapel Hill and MAHEC are addressing health professions gaps in Western North Carolina by working together to bring UNC's world-class dental, medical, pharmacy and public health education to the region.

## RESEARCH

Our research partnerships are driving innovation in teaching, clinical care and community health while connecting us to academic health centers and programs across the United States for maximum impact.

## SERVICE

We are committed to building capacity in the communities we serve to address the social, economic and physical factors that influence health outcomes and inequities in Western North Carolina.



## 'A HUGE PUBLIC SERVICE'

Of the 16 counties MAHEC serves in Western North Carolina, 12 are federally designated dental health professional shortage areas. UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC hopes to move the needle with a new program designed for dental students interested in practicing in rural areas.

The Rural Oral Health Scholars program brings dental students from the UNC Adams School of Dentistry to Western North Carolina, where they rotate between MAHEC's two dental centers in Asheville and Columbus. Students gain the hands-on experience they need to graduate while providing much-needed services to the local populace.

*"There is a great need for oral health care that is accessible and affordable, and we also need to train dentists who particularly understand this problem and want to help. It's not only an education path for students — it's a huge public service."*

—Katherine Jowers, D.D.S.  
Director, Rural Oral Health Scholars



# EXPANDING TREATMENT

UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC serves the region — and the state — in innovative ways.

For example, regional addiction medicine programs based at MAHEC in Asheville and UNC-Chapel Hill are providing education, training and technical assistance to expand office-based opioid treatment services at community-based health centers, health departments and free clinics across the state. These efforts to create scalable solutions to the opioid crisis are supported by the Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts (FORE) and Dogwood Health Trust.

With MAHEC's established infrastructure and existing relationships with on-the-ground organizations and Carolina's world-class research and teaching expertise, UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC is well poised to address community needs and improve health outcomes.

## KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

- Training North Carolina to treat opioid use disorder
- Increasing maternal and child health resources
- Innovating health sciences education
- Addressing health disparities and inequities
- Transforming rural health practices
- Building North Carolina's health care workforce





## WORLD-CLASS FACULTY



### ROBYN LATESSA AND INNOVATIVE EDUCATION

Robyn Latessa, M.D., is the director and assistant dean for the UNC School of Medicine Asheville campus. This branch campus has grown from four students per year in 2009 to 35 students in 2021, and its innovative longitudinal integrated clerkships model is proving successful across the U.S. and internationally.

*“It’s been a joy to see our Asheville campus grow. Our students thrive in our novel curriculum, built on continuity and relationships of preceptors, patients, place and peers. Our interdisciplinary campus and opportunities for rural medical education are making substantial contributions to the current and future health of our community.”*



### TAMARIE MACON AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

Tamarie Macon, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and the director of community initiatives for MAHEC. Macon builds relationships with communities to co-create equitable systems and policy change. As a Teaching Excellence and Innovation Award winner, Macon strives to create transformative experiences in the classroom.

*“Relationships are at the heart of our curriculum and ethos for eliminating health inequities and sustainably improving the social determinants of health. I truly delight in the opportunities to engage with students as we strive to transform the capacity of people, institutions and systems to better promote well-being for all.”*

### STEPHANIE KISER AND IMPROVING ACCESS



Stephanie Kiser, R.Ph., is the director for rural health and interprofessional education for the UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy. Kiser serves as a faculty member on the Asheville campus, which is well known for its exceptional training in team-based ambulatory care, focus on caring for rural and underserved populations, and community engagement.

*“Having the opportunity to work with our outstanding students, faculty and interprofessional partners to shape the future of health care in Western North Carolina is a true gift. Our students experience all that the number-one school of pharmacy has to offer, right here, in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains.”*

# THE INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC brings together the nation's leading faculty, researchers and staff in the fields of dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and public health to develop interdisciplinary approaches to Western North Carolina's most pressing health care challenges. Interprofessional opportunities include immersive experiences in rural settings, interprofessional case discussions and co-curricular activities.

- Early in the pandemic, Carolina medical, pharmacy and public health students worked in interprofessional teams to identify and respond to a variety of emerging needs, including those related to migrant farmworkers, isolated older residents, incarcerated populations and individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Collaborative teams from the UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy and MAHEC's Center for Healthy Aging piloted a new home-based primary care program designed to address the social and medical needs of vulnerable home-bound elderly patients in the community.
- A master of public health student evaluated and wrote about the Medical-Legal Partnership Initiative, where a lawyer embedded in MAHEC's obstetrical practice trained medical assistants to screen and educate low-to-moderate income patients about the Earned Income Tax Credit and refer eligible patients for free tax preparation assistance.

*"This experience opened my eyes to how different perspectives and approaches of interprofessional team members can come together to solve problems more effectively."*

— David Hicks, UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, Class of 2021

## INVEST IN TRANSFORMATION

**Join us in our work to transform health care.**

In order to advance and sustain our innovative work in health care education, research and service, we need investors and supporters like you. UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC is doing important work in expanding access to maternity care, substance use treatment, youth health careers education, interprofessional education and team-based care, healthy aging and home-based primary care, health equity and uplifting communities, and more.

**With your support, the possibilities are endless.**

