

What is HSTA-AL?

Health Sciences & Technology Academy – Alabama

The Health Sciences & Technology Academy-Alabama, known as HSTA-AL, is the first-of-its kind SEPA project to replicate West Virginia's SEPA-supported Health Sciences & Technology Academy with important adaptations for rural Alabama. HSTA-AL's goal is to build diversity in Alabama's nursing, nurse-faculty, and nurse-scientist professions by opening the doors to higher education for rural, underserved, economically disadvantaged, primarily African American high school students.

HSTA-AL is innovative in its purpose of building a pipeline of students to STEM health-related fields, including nursing, nurse faculty, nurse scientists, and other biomedical fields from those underrepresented in the nursing workforce and from underserved rural communities in Alabama. Using a citizen science approach, we will mentor and facilitate professional preparedness of high school students from underserved communities for college and careers in STEM fields, and in particular into academic nursing and nursing science by helping them become agents of change in their own communities. HSTA-AL will also provide professional development to teachers to build science content and pedagogical skills for use with HSTA-AL students and in school classrooms.

Nurses are in short supply nationwide, particularly nurse scientists, nurse faculty, and registered nurses from underrepresented groups and rural areas. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, people of color represent nearly 40% of the U.S. population, but they comprise only about 20% of the nursing workforce¹ and 16% of full-time nursing faculty². To change this dynamic, we must encourage students to enter the field of nursing before they graduate from high school—especially those from underrepresented populations. Many do not envision themselves attending university, let alone becoming university faculty or nurse researchers.

This project will determine whether the pathways HSTA-AL students choose are similar to those of WV HSTA students and if HSTA-AL outcomes are on a trajectory to reflect the outcomes achieved by WV HSTA over the last 25 years.

1. American Association of Colleges of Nursing. Enhancing Diversity in the Workforce. 2019; <https://www.aacnnursing.org/News-Information/Fact-Sheets/Enhancing-Diversity>.

2. American Association of Colleges of Nursing. Nursing Faculty: A Spotlight on Diversity. 2017; <http://www.aacnnursing.org/portals/42/policy/pdf/diversityspotlight.pdf>. Accessed April 30, 2020.

SEPA-funded West Virginia HSTA:

- Began over 25 years ago
- Nearly 3000 graduates of the program
- 89% graduation rate among those who matriculate to college
- Many graduates go on to pursue advanced degrees
- 84% stay in West Virginia to work

