

HCOP Talking Points July 2016

The Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP), authorized under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act, is the only federal pipeline program for minority and disadvantaged K-16 students who want to become health professionals.

- In addition to encouraging K-16 students to pursue the health professions, the programs offer academic enrichment and career guidance to college students applying to health professions programs. HCOPs also sponsor pre-health post-baccalaureate programs for individuals that seek to pursue health care careers after graduating college.
- Studies have demonstrated how effective such pipeline programs are in strengthening students' academic records, improving test scores, and helping minority and disadvantaged students become more competitive applicants for health professions training programs.

Federal funding is critical to the survival of HCOP.

- This year, the President's budget requested \$14.2 million for the program; however, both the House and Senate propose eliminating the program in their respective FY 2017 spending bills.
- Two-thirds of HCOP programs leverage their federal grants to secure other sources of funding.
- If funding is lost, HCOP will not be able to offer the robust and rigorous programming that helps prepare students for a health professions career.

HCOP helps produce a racially and ethnically diverse health care workforce that is important to meeting the health care needs of underserved populations, improving cultural awareness of all health professionals, and eliminating health disparities.

- Including students from diverse social backgrounds enhances learning for all students and leads to more culturally competent, patient-centered care.
- Efforts to diversify the pipeline are inextricably linked to the educational outcomes at the K-12 level. HCOP helps to prepare the talent pool that will provide a larger cadre of individuals for careers in medicine and other health professions.
- HCOP programs help guide students to careers in the high-demand health care field, linking individuals to a rewarding career and producing a workforce able to meet the health care needs of every community.
- HCOP not only stimulates an interest in the health professions among underrepresented minorities, but also is effective in graduating students that successfully matriculate into health professions programs.