

A Ten Year Journey with Rady Children's Health Summer Medical Academy Program

Background:

With a rapidly changing healthcare landscape, San Diego has a growing need for medical professionals who are trained and prepared to enter the job market with knowledge and compassion. Established in 2014, the Rady Children's Health (RCH) Medical Academy (MA) was founded to address this need as well as provide financial support for FACES for the Future program (FACES), a school-based healthcare career pathways program. MA and FACES are facilitated by the Center for Healthier Communities (CHC) at RCH.



Our CHET team providing hands on intubation practice

Program Description:

MA is a learning and growth opportunity with goals to 1) Expand knowledge in the breadth and depth of a myriad of healthcare opportunities, 2) Experience practical skills in an immersive, hands-on format and 3) Explore real-life career paths and clinical experiences through direct connections with clinical specialists. MA is supported by more than

125 faculty from RCH and other healthcare facilities. Program goals are met through; lectures/interactive discussions, hands-on skills clinics, group projects, career panels and team building/networking activities. Established primarily for high school students, participants are recruited through the MA website (<https://sdhealthscholars.org/about-medical-academy/>), email, word of mouth, and social media. College-aged students are not eligible to apply to the summer session.

Program Evaluation:

To assess program satisfaction and impact, daily and final evaluations are completed by participants.



Professional career panel

Additionally, alumni, staff and faculty feedback inform quality improvement efforts for program content and logistics.

Program Satisfaction:

The final evaluation for each academy revealed that 93% of students reported MA reinforced and/or increased their interest in pursuing a healthcare career; 92% said they would recommend the program to a friend; and 92% of students reported that the MA met or exceeded their expectations.



Exploring the Mercy Air helicopter

Growth and Development:

Since its inception, MA has grown from one summer session to two, and four weekend sessions

throughout the year. In this time, it also expanded from 36 participants in 2014, to 905* participants as of November 2024. The program participants' reported genders are 79% female and 21% male. Further, 3% of MA participants travelled to RCH from out of state, representing Arizona, Utah, Florida, Illinois, Colorado and Nevada, as well as international.

Our evaluations, as well as local projected workforce needs, informed the creation and implementation of career specific weekend academies that include nursing, physician assistant, and mental health.



Suture practice

The Journey Continues:

MA provides a unique and highly sought-after opportunity for high school and early college students across the region and beyond. It is clear from the feedback that programming is impactful. Next steps will include: distributing and analyzing an alumni survey to assess health career decisions and post graduate employment.

*programs were impacted by the Covid pandemic and many were cancelled from 2020-2022 based on public health requirements