Executive Summary
Summer Medical and Dental Education Program

The Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP) is a six-week academic enrichment summer program to help qualified undergraduate students from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds compete successfully for medical and dental school admission.

This long-running national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) provides medical and dental school preparation—free of charge—to incoming college sophomores and juniors who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Identify with a racial or ethnic group that is underrepresented in medicine and dentistry, primarily Blacks, American Indians, and Hispanics
- Come from an economically or educationally disadvantaged background
- Demonstrate an interest in issues affecting underserved populations

Read the full report. Learn more about the program here.

CONTEXT
Racial and ethnic minorities have long been underrepresented in medicine and dentistry. Non-minorities from disadvantaged circumstances also face special challenges to entering the medical and dental professions.

In 1970, minorities constituted 16 percent of the U.S. population but only 2.3 percent of the nation's medical students and 5.9 percent of all medical professionals, according to a 1978 report of the AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) Task Force on Minority Student Opportunities in Medicine.
Since then, in the wake of civil rights legislation and various public and private initiatives, minority students have entered medical school in larger numbers. However, while narrowed, the gap remains.

Poverty and related socioeconomic factors that contribute to minority underrepresentation also have an impact on the entry of disadvantaged non-minorities into the health professions, according to an AAMC analysis\(^1\) of students entering medical school in the years 1987–2005.

Underrepresentation in medicine is not just an issue of career opportunity. Research shows that minority doctors and dentists are more likely than their non-minority colleagues to practice in underserved, low-income areas and treat minority patients.

**Program Evolution**

RWJF launched the program in 1987 to help pre-med students from underrepresented minority groups and subsequently expanded the focus in 2003 to include students based on socioeconomic factors regardless of race and ethnicity and again in 2005 to add students interested in dentistry.

As the program evolved, so did its name—from *Minority Medical Education Program* to *Summer Medical Education Program* and, in 2005, to *Summer Medical and Dental Education Program*.

Also of evolutionary significance: starting with the 2006 session, the program limited participation to incoming sophomores, juniors and, in one site, a limited number of rising freshmen. The program previously was open to all undergraduates and recent graduates. The change reflected a determination that younger students received greater benefit from the curriculum.

As of 2013, medical and dental schools at 12 universities across the country participate in the program. Each site enrolls 80 students a summer and provides instruction in the basic sciences and math, help with writing and oral presentations and with developing learning and study skills, exposure to health policy issues, assistance in financial planning, and a clinical experience.

**KEY RESULTS**

The national program office reports that from the first summer session in 1989 through 2012, there were 21,340 students who participated in the enrichment program.

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\(^1\) See the analysis, “*Diversity of U.S. Medical Students by Parental Income*,” online.
The vast majority—14,659—participated during 1989–2005 when the program was for pre-med students only.

Of those 14,659 participants, 63.5 percent (9,458) subsequently applied to MD-granting institutions.

- Of the medical school applicants, 65.7 percent (6,216) were accepted.
- Of those accepted, 98.4 percent (6,118) entered medical school.
- Of those who entered MD-granting institutions, to date 75.8 percent (5,410) have graduated.

From 2006, when the program began accepting pre-dental students, through the 2012 cohort, there were 6,681 participants—81 percent (5,409) as pre-medical students and 19 percent (1,644) as pre-dental students.

At the time this report was last updated (August 2013), the results for the classes of 2006–2012 were:

- Of the 5,409 pre-med students who participated, 30.4 percent (1,644) applied to MD-granting institutions, and 65.5 percent (1,077) were accepted. Of those, 97.8 percent (1,053) enrolled; 69 have graduated.

- Of the 1,644 pre-dental students who participated, 34.2 percent (563) have applied to U.S. dental schools, and 73.7 percent (415) were accepted. Of those, 100 percent enrolled; 42 have graduated.

Since SMDEP scholars represent a younger cohort of participants—freshmen and sophomore college students—the data on applications to professional schools or other choices are available at the earliest three years after program participation. The numbers here primarily reflect the classes of 2006–2009. Participants since then would still be in undergraduate studies.

**PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) in Washington is officially the national program office. However, the AAMC runs the program collaboratively with the American Dental Education Association (ADEA).

**FUNDING**

**CHALLENGES AHEAD**

- Reaching the types of students the program was designed to help—those from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds—is an ongoing challenge.

- Increasing the response rate to the alumni tracking surveys remains an objective.

- Participating medical and dental schools have faced financial challenges of varying degrees.

**The Evaluation**

RWJF has funded an evaluation by Mathematica Policy Research of Princeton, N.J., to look at the impact of the program and what factors and components contribute to its success, among other things. It closes at the end of June 2014.

**Program Management**

**National Program Office:** Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) in conjunction with the American Dental Education Association (ADEA).

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