



ALASKA NATIVE HEALTH

TRAINING ALASKA'S FUTURE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

THE DELLA KEATS PROGRAM

The Della Keats program provides a bridge to college and health careers for talented Alaska high school students from underserved and underrepresented populations, nurtures intellectual curiosity and introduces Alaska's future health professionals to exciting, high-demand fields.

DEEP ROOTS

A prominent Iñupiaq traditional healer from Kotzebue inspired the Della Keats program, which extends a hand to talented pre-college students—particularly students from Alaska Native or rural Alaska backgrounds who understand the needs specific to their communities. The program gives them an insider perspective on future health-care careers. Twelve years ago, the Della Keats program merged with a closely related program, U-DOC, which also helped pre-college students prepare for medical careers. The Alaska WWAMI School of Medical Education—Alaska's medical school—runs this merged program. Students in it can explore careers in medicine, medical research, nursing and public health.

**'We need
a calm day,
a happy day'**

*Della Keats
1907–1986*



BY THE NUMBERS

The Della Keats program served 216 high school students between 2002 and 2013, including 77 Alaska Native students and 64 students from rural areas not connected to the state's road system. Most of these students have either launched their college studies or are just now completing their final year of high school.

A SUMMER OF LEARNING

High school juniors and seniors willing to dedicate part of their summer to academic exploration may participate in the core DK program, known as the Della Keats Health Sciences Summer Program. The summer program

introduces students to subjects they'll need for success in health professions, such as oral and written communication, microbiology, genetics, anatomy and public health. These courses expose the students to lecture and laboratory environments and familiarize them with college expectations. Participants also visit relevant academic and student-support programs on campus, tour local medical facilities and shadow at least four health professionals during their summer.

Students who just completed their junior or senior year are eligible for the six-week program. Alaska Native students or those from



Students enrolled in the Della Keats program learn skills they'll need in health professions.

rural backgrounds receive highest priority for admission. All admitted students stay in supervised housing on campus and receive a stipend to cover miscellaneous expenses.

ADVANCED STUDY—A SUMMER OF RESEARCH

In 2012, funding from New York Life Insurance Co. helped create the Della Keats Summer Research Program. Students who complete the Health Sciences Summer Program, or a similar program such as UAF's RAHI program, between their junior and senior years of high school are eligible to return for a second summer before continuing to college. These experienced DK students work as research interns, staying in residence halls and mentoring incoming DKHSSP students.

The DK research interns work alongside UAA health researchers, gaining valuable laboratory experience. Paired with UAA faculty mentors, students formulate and complete health-related research projects of their own. The 2013 interns worked with faculty from the UAA departments of biological sciences, chemistry, psychology, public health and WWAMI School of Medical Education, revealing their research findings to peers and the public in end-of-summer presentations.



Della Keats students practice their new diagnostic skills in the Nursing Department's SIM lab.

Dr. Ian van Tets, a UAA physiologist, works with two high school research students. Rachael Blurton is now in her final year of college and works every summer as a Della Keats peer mentor. Christa Eussen, a shareholder in the Doyon and Deloycheet Native corporations, graduated from UAA with departmental honors in chemistry in May 2014 and will start medical school in New Mexico in Fall 2014.



THE NEXT CHAPTER

UAA welcomes many Della Keats Program graduates into health programs as incoming freshmen.

We will continue to expand the program, with the support of the Alaska WWAMI School of Medical Education and help from generous donors. In 2013, Della Keats was able to accept 28 students: 20 into the DKHSSP and four into the DKSRP. Della Keats also supported four Alaska Native students selected by the Alaska Native Community Advancement in Psychology program, which supplemented their Della Keats experience with an introduction to college and clinical psychology.

Hazel Brogdon

Hazel has known for a long time that she wanted to be a physician, and it has shown in her history of working in research laboratories as part of the Della Keats and NIH Step-Up programs, and later as an intern at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. She was one of three Alaska Native-American Indian students accepted in WWAMI's entering class of 2013, and completed her first year of medical school in Spring 2014. "My long-term goal is to practice medicine in Alaska at the Alaska Native Medical Center," she said. "I also hope to be a positive role model and impact the lives of younger Alaska Natives interested in practicing medicine in the future."



Carla Cartagena de Jesus

Originally from Puerto Rico, Carla completed the Della Keats program in 2007 and earned a bachelor's degree in biological sciences from UAF. The Alaska WWAMI program accepted her in 2012; she is completing her second year of medical school in Seattle. Carla plans to practice medicine, possibly pediatrics, in Alaska after completing the program.



LEARN MORE

Please contact Anecia O'Carroll at (907) 786-1944 or atocarroll@uaa.alaska.edu, to learn how you can strengthen Alaska's health care workforce and help provide pre-college experience for Alaska high school students from underserved and underrepresented communities.

Visit the WWAMI School of Medical Education website at www.uaa.alaska.edu/wwami, or call the WWAMI office at (907) 786-4737, to learn more.



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