

Rural Immersion Planning Guide: WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars Program

AHEC:

The Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) program was developed by Congress in 1971 to recruit, train and retain a health professions workforce committed to underserved populations. The AHEC program helps bring the resources of academic medicine to address local community health needs. WVAHEC addresses disparities in rural health and encourages cooperation between the community and the providers of rural health.

The AHEC mission is to improve the health of our communities by developing an interdisciplinary workforce prepared to address the health needs of rural and underserved communities of West Virginia.

WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars:

Rural Community Health Scholars is a program designed with one goal in mind: to enhance each scholar's ability to create change and reshape the status quo for health care in his or her community. Throughout this program, scholars will engage in clinical, didactic, and community based activities in rural and underserved areas of WV to build their skill set *and* positively impact the lives of West Virginians.

Scholars must complete the following each year for two years to fulfill the requirements for this program:

- Engage in 40 hours of community-based experiential or clinical training in a rural or underserved area
- Earn 40 hours of didactic education through completion of one of the following modules:
 - Community Rural immersion Module
 - Cultural Competency Module
 - Interprofessional Education Module

Your Role as a Center Director:

As a center director, you will design and implement a rural immersion in your region as part of the *Community Rural Immersion* module. The following is a step-by-step guide designed to help you create this experience.

This guide is based on the experience of the WVU Rural Track staff, and is designed to ensure that you consider multiple avenues when planning your immersion. Included are step-by-step instructions on how to plan an immersion that is best suited for your area and the needs of your community.



You will also find key quotes from Treah Haggerty, MD and Heather Hanks, BS, who have planned multiple immersions. These quotes are helpful tidbits of information (learned along the way) to be considered as you plan your immersion as well.

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Planning Your Event

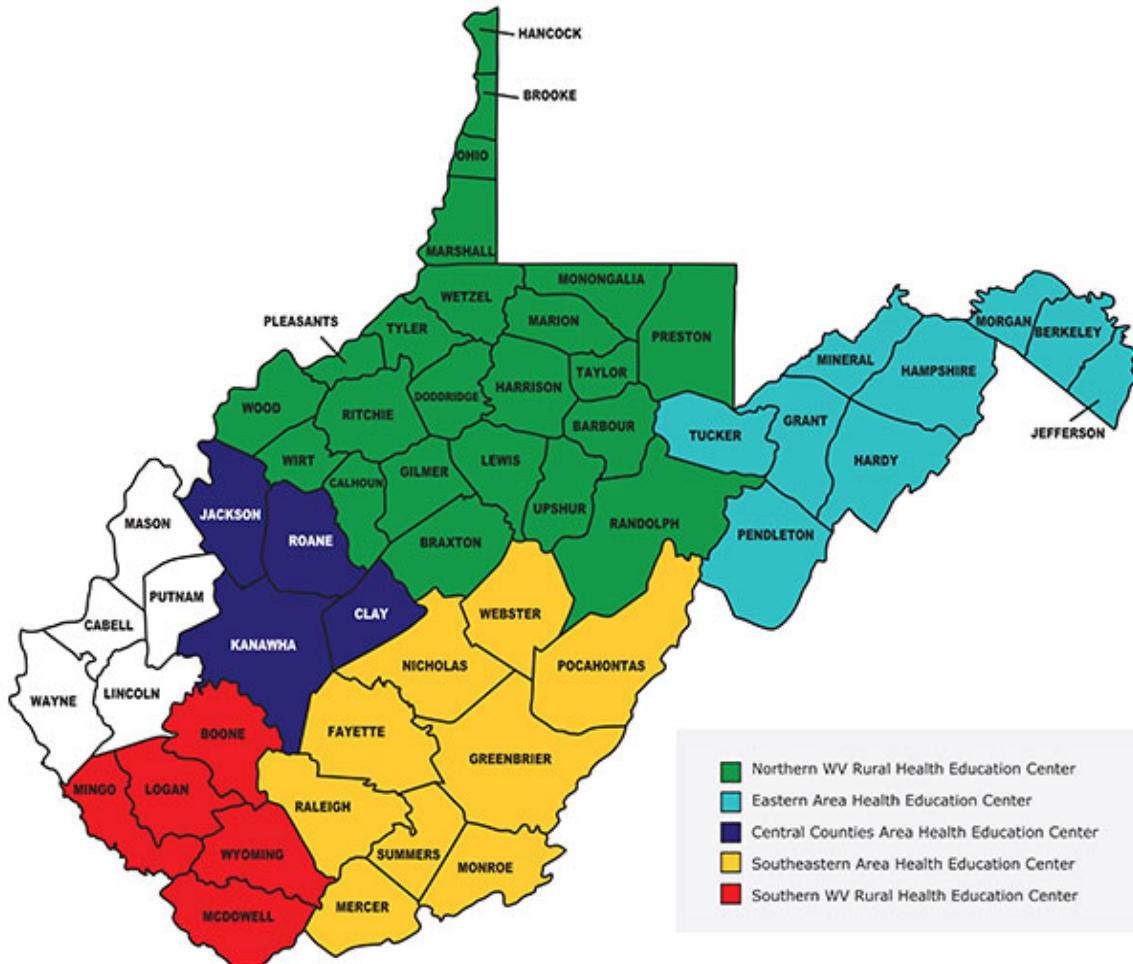
1. Identify Potential Locations:

Consider the AHEC region and county in which you plan to complete the rural immersion. List the best option(s) for immersive experiences below, and perhaps jot down a few details explaining what potential topics you might select:



AHEC Region:

County:



2. Identify Housing:



Before booking, consider several options in the area and ensure the location is safe and comfortable for those attending the immersion. Moreover, note the distance from your housing location to the sites you plan to visit, the restaurants/stores you plan to frequent, and any other resources you may need. Additionally, take into account the number of bedrooms in the house and ensure there are separate spaces for female and male students.

Some examples of where to find housing include, but are not limited to, West Virginia State Parks, AirBnB.com, VRBO.com (Vacation Rental by Owner), and RHI housing (if available).

Housing Location	Distance from Immersion Site	Pros	Cons

Perspectives from WVU Rural Track:

“We found that it is best to keep the students in separate housing from faculty/staff to allow each group to have ‘downtime’. It also fairs well to get students into a single unit or units with close proximity to allow for ease of transport/community building. ~Trea

“Utilizing lodging that has Wi-Fi capabilities and a land line telephone is a must in rural areas. You will often find that cell reception is poor and having these amenities allow the students to continue school work while on their trip. It is also important for students to feel that they can spread out. Having a few common areas (large kitchen, living room, outdoor fire pit) to gather in during their downtime is a key factor in student satisfaction on a rural immersion. Also, prior to making your reservations, check to make sure what time you can check in to your housing unit, as well as if towels and bedding are provided.” ~Heather

3. Identify Community Health Issues:

Emerging health issues in your region may be of interest when formulating plans for your rural immersion; introducing students to such concepts may prompt healthy discussion and generate ideas to promote change in your community. Please see the AHEC website resources tab for a list of places you can find this type of information.



Consider what health issues are prevalent in the geographical area of your rural immersion and list them below:

1.
2.
3.

Once you have determined what issue(s) you want to focus on, develop a list of learning objectives and outcomes to evaluate in pre and post surveys using the space below:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Perspectives from WVU Rural Track:

“We try to do a variety of activities that are centered on a common health issue specific to the region. We have found that it is best to have a mixture of clinical components with local healthcare providers and hands on activities (mock rescue scenario, visiting an active coal mine, etc.) to ensure the students are getting a true understanding to the issues the area is facing.”
~Heather

4. Identify Community Needs:



In relation to the health issues identified above, consider what needs you can meet with a rural immersion in your community. For this particular planning stage, try to think about what specific needs your community has, and not only about what you think you have to offer.

Relationships are built quicker and last longer when we listen to the needs of our communities, rather than try to implement xyz because we *think* it's what they need.

List a few of your community needs below – then, double check with community members or key stake holders to ensure these needs are accurate.

1.
2.
3.

Perspectives from WVU Rural Track:

“We felt that providing immersed and in-depth education in relation to black lung disease for future rural primary care physicians would benefit the state of West Virginia - specifically southern rural West Virginia residents. This addressed an important health issue and met a community need.” ~Trea

5. Identify Community Partners:

Build relationships with community partners who can help you achieve the goals of your rural immersion as they pertain to your community health issue(s) and need(s). Be sure to consider healthcare and non-healthcare partners, Health Alliances, Academic partners, etc.



List a few community partnerships that may be beneficial for your immersion below:

1.
2.
3.

Perspectives from WVU Rural Track:

“When planning our Winter Immersion, we were able to identify contacts at Canaan State Park and Healthnet to help with mock disaster training and implementation. We also worked with local academic clinicians to give insight and overview on the economics of healthcare around tourism in a rural location. These partnerships were pivotal to our student’s understanding of the key needs/health issues we were trying to convey.” ~Trea

*“After you have made connections with your community partners, make a word document that includes your student names and corresponding pictures to distribute prior to your arrival. This helps them prepare activities and is handy to have with you on your trip.”
~Heather*

6. Identify Learning Activities:



When planning learning activities, be sure to keep the community partners you identified above in mind. Consider the following prompts when planning your activities:

- What are the strengths of your rural immersion community?
- How do they relate to the health issue(s) and community need(s) you have identified above?
- How can immersion best facilitate your student’s learning with respect to those areas?
- What activities would best prompt community building, discussion, and a call for change?

List a few ideas below:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Perspectives from WVU Rural Track:

“On our southern immersion, we knew we would like to focus on the health issue of black lung pneumoconiosis. We were able to identify community partners that were key to including activities such as experiencing an active coal mine, following patients through a black lung federal benefit evaluation, and black lung pulmonary rehabilitation. We have found community partners to be positive in collaborating on providing these experiences.” ~TreaH

7. Identify Recruitment Activities:

Recruitment, while not an obligation, is an often overlooked part of planning rural immersions – but it is equally important. Specifically, think about how students might perceive a rural community when attending an immersion (this may be a student’s first experience in a rural setting, for example).



Accordingly, please think about the strengths and opportunities available in your community, as well as how they can be presented to student participants. When planning activities, location, housing, community partners, etc., consider that students are beginning to think about their future practice locations; they may be a great fit to meet a need in your community.

How can the activities you planned in the previous step be linked to a recruitment opportunity? Consider this using the space below:

1.
2.

Perspectives from WVU Rural Track:

“Students have participated in activities that were somewhat costly, and others that were essentially free. On the lower end of the spectrum, our students thoroughly enjoy hearing the stories told by an Appalachian story teller on our southern immersion, as well as free time to allow students to hike or explore a local swimming hole; on the higher end, we went whitewater rafting. Each of these activities has a different price point, but students have ranked them all highly.” ~TreaH

8. Identify Meal Options:



Plan to cover each breakfast, lunch, and dinner during the immersion. This can be accomplished with sit down restaurants, packed meals, or meal supplies at housing – there is a lot of flexibility here. Prior to the trip you should note any accommodations you may need to make for dietary restrictions.

Use the space below to list a few options in your area for each meal:

	Breakfast (est. cost)	Lunch (est. cost)	Dinner (est. cost)
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			

Perspectives from WVU Rural Track:

“Student and faculty/staff generally work better and accomplish more when they have consistent (planned) access to food and drinks. We also bring snacks and a cooler with a variety of drinks/water to account for when students need a pick-me-up. ” ~Trea

“One way to cut down on food cost is to pack breakfast options with you for morning meals. This takes some planning ahead of time, but is worth it in the long run. If you decide to bring breakfast, make sure you have a large kitchen in your house/cabin to accommodate your group.

Suggestions on breakfast grocery list include:

- Oatmeal
- Cereal
- Milk: Buy this when you get to your site
- Granola Bars
- Fruit: Bananas, Apples, Oranges, etc.
- Yogurt
- English Muffins
- Bagels
- Cream Cheese
- Butter
- Coffee: Check to see what kind of coffee maker your house has
- Creamer
- Lemonade
- Paper Products: Plates, Paper Towels, Towels, Napkins, Utensils
- Sugar
- Juices

It is imperative to bring snacks and drinks with you on an immersion trip. I send out an email two weeks prior to the trip asking if anyone has requests (Appendix A and B). Keep some snacks in the car if you will be traveling all day, and some in the student house for people to have in the evenings. Always have a cooler in the car with water.

Some of the items I try to include are listed below:

- *Trail Mix*
- *Cliff Bars*
- *Small Bags of Pretzels*
- *Small Bags of Chips*
- *Crackers*
- *Water*
- *Ginger Ale*
- *Gatorade*
- *Granola Bars*

When you plan out your trip, think about the restaurants you want to utilize for lunch and dinner. If you are traveling with a large group, I would suggest calling ahead to make reservations and to confirm they will be able to accommodate you. Also, bring multiple copies of your tax exempt certificate if you plan to use a state purchasing Card (if applicable)."

~Heather

9. Identify Transportation Options:

Prior to the immersion, consider how you will transport all participants. There are several options, but each requires additional consideration:

- Private cars: plan for mileage reimbursement in your budget.
- Community resources: you may be able to request transportation from partners, such as university vehicles and church vans.
- Rentals: contact rental agencies in advance to consider pricing options and budget accordingly.



Additionally, be sure to account for luggage/supply space, note any accommodations you may need to make (wheelchair access, student with an injury, etc.), and consider how you will get around once you get to the site of your immersion.

Perspectives from WVU Rural Track:

"If you rent vehicles, we have found that it is easiest to pick the students up at their houses the morning of the immersion so that they do not have to leave their cars parked unattended while we are away. Also, print out the addresses and directions to all of the locations that you will be traveling to for the week. You may not have access to GPS or cell phone. Paper copies are always good to have." ~ Heather

What to Provide To Your Rural Immersion Participants:

Prior to the Rural Immersion, provide students with an agenda/itinerary (Appendix C) and a detailed list of items they need to bring (Appendix A). Ask students about any food or transportation accommodations that need to be made. We have included an example of the email sent to participants on prior immersions in Appendix A as well.

Check with leadership of community partners to see if there is any additional information they may need about the students prior to the activity. For example, some community partners may need participants to sign a waiver, photo release form, or disclosure, and others may need clothing/shoe sizes (you can find an example of a WVU photo release form in Appendix E).

Experiences on the immersion may also require that participants have prior knowledge of a certain topic; check with your community partners to see if any prior-learning needs to occur before taking your group on an immersion.

How to Evaluate the Experience:

You should evaluate your immersion based on the planned objectives identified in step 3 as they relate to your topic. For an example, please see the Community Rural Immersion module on SOLE; for navigation, log into SOLE, click on the appropriate module, and then using the menu on the left hand side of the site, click Content → Start Here! → Schedule.

Additionally, for a sample evaluation, please see Appendix D.

"I suggest collecting this data electronically vs. on paper. We typically send the final evaluation out when we return from the trip. This allows a secure way to get anonymous responses."

~Heather

APPENDIX A: Southern Black Lung Pneumoconiosis Rural Immersion Example

Email sent from coordinator to students prior to immersion:

Hello,

Please see the attached itinerary for your M2 Southern Rural Immersion trip.

Dr. Haggerty and I will be with you throughout the trip. We plan to start picking you up at your houses at 8:30am on Monday, July 30th. We will return to Morgantown on Friday evening. We will have three large SUV's to travel in during the week.

Please send me the following items before Friday:

1. Address of where you would like picked up
2. Cell Phone Number
3. Complete the attached form for the New River Breathing Center
4. The last four of you SS# (this is for tracking purposes underground in the coal mine)
5. Coverall size for coal mine (S,M,L XL – etc.)
6. Boot size for coal mine

I will be going to the store to pick up snacks and drinks to have with us during the week. If there is anything in particular that you would like, please feel free to let me know and I will make sure to get it for you. Also, there are two mornings that we will be doing breakfast at the student house. Please let me know if there are any particular breakfast items that you would like to have.

List of things you will need for the trip:

1. Stethoscope
2. Swimsuit or lightweight (dry-fit) clothes for whitewater rafting
3. Water Shoes or Strap on Sandals
4. Towel for after whitewater rafting (I will bring some extras with me)
5. Wednesday and Thursday you will be in clinical settings. Business casual clothing is suggested for these days
6. The evenings will be relaxed and informal (casual clothes)
7. Clothing and shoes you don't mind to get dirty

I will send out more info next week. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to email me with any questions or concerns that you may have.

Looking forward to spending next week with you!

Talk to you soon!

-Heather

APPENDIX B: Coordinator Packing List

1. First Aid Kit
2. Medicine (make sure to bring Dramamine or Zofran)
3. Printed Directions to Clinics, Restaurants, Activities, Housing, etc.
4. Tax Exempt Certificate (Bring Plenty!)
5. Contact List: Make a spreadsheet with everyone's phone number and address for the trip (Students, Faculty, Community Members, Restaurants, Lodging Contact, etc.)
6. Envelope to collect receipts from the trip: These can get easily misplaced if you do not have a secure location.
7. Copy of Budget
8. Housing Reservations
9. Vehicle Rental Confirmation
10. Check your Purchasing Card Limit (if applicable)

APPENDIX C: Southern Black Lung Pneumoconiosis Itinerary Example

Arrive at Pineville, WV

Monday, July 30th

8:30am	Begin Student Pick Up in Morgantown
10:00am	Depart Morgantown – Start Travel to Clay, WV
12:00pm	Lunch <i>Subway (Clay, WV)</i>
1:00pm	Clinic Visit with Dr. Kimberly Becher
3:00pm	Travel to Pineville, WV
5:00pm	Check In to Student Housing
6:30pm	Dinner <i>Ole Jose (Pineville, WV)</i>

Tug River Clinic/Catterson Health Center

Wednesday, August 1st

	Breakfast @ Student Housing
7:00am	Leave for Tug River
8:00am	Tug River Clinic: Overview of Black Lung Clinic Dr. Randy Forehand, MD, B Reader & Black Lung Specialist One on one time with clinic staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Benefits Counselor ❖ Black Lung Nurse ❖ Respiratory Therapist ❖ Physician Reading X-Rays ❖ Primary Care Provider
11:30am	Travel to Pineville, WV
12:30pm	Lunch
1:30pm	Catterson Health Center: Clinic Tour & Overview Dr. Joanna Bailey, Primary Care Provider
4:30pm	Travel to Fayetteville: Check In to Student Housing
6:30pm	Dinner <i>Pies and Pints (Fayetteville, WV)</i>

Alpha Coal Surface Mine Tour

Tuesday, July 31st

	Breakfast @ Student Housing
7:00am	Leave for Mine Health and Safety Academy <i>Beaver, WV</i>
8:00am	Arrive at Mine Health and Safety Academy
8:30am	Participate in Mock Emergency Rescue
11:45am	Lunch @ MHSa Cafeteria
11:45am	Depart for Coal Mine Tour
1:00pm	Arrive at Coal Site <i>Get dressed in proper reflective clothing and participate in training session</i>
1:45pm	Underground Coal Mine Tour
4:00pm	Depart for Pineville, WV
6:30pm	BBQ Cookout: Twin Falls Resort State Park <i>Pavilion #3</i>

New River Breathing Center

Thursday, August 2nd

7:00am	Breakfast <i>Bob Evans (Fayetteville, WV)</i>
8:30am	Depart for New River Health Breathing Center <i>Scarbro, WV</i>
9:00am	New River Breathing Center & Pulmonary Rehab <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Spirometry testing ❖ X-rays ❖ CWP Visits ❖ GAD Pulmonary Rehab Clinic ❖ Spirometry testing ❖ Pulmonary Rehab Maintenance Class ❖ Federal benefit counseling
12:30pm	Lunch <i>Tamarack (Beckley, WV)</i>
1:30pm	Free Time
5:30pm	Dinner
8:00pm	Escape Room

Whitewater Rafting

Friday, August 3rd

7:00am	Breakfast
8:15am	Arrive at River Expeditions
9:15am	Whitewater Rafting Lower New River Gorge
12:30pm	Return to River Expeditions
1:00pm	Lunch: Reflection and Debrief <i>Secret Sandwich Society (Fayetteville, WV)</i>

Nutrition Rural Immersion

General Nutrition Education

	Select only one					Choose one, if appropriate	
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	NA – this was not covered	I would have liked MORE content in this area	I would have liked LESS content in this area
As a result of my time spent with the faculty and staff during the weekend , I now have a better working knowledge of:							
The Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The qualifications of participating in SNAP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food Environment Atlas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The main food groups and the recommended proportions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dietary Guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What qualifies an area as a “food desert”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patient barriers to healthy nutrition in rural areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Healthy alternative options to recommend for patient nutrition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The government change from the food pyramid to the myplate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. How will this Nutrition Rural Immersion affect your future practice?

2. What did you like the best about the Nutrition Rural Immersion?

3. What changes should be made to improve this trip?

4. Were the lodging accommodations acceptable?

Yes ____ No ____ Comments: _____

5. How would you rate the length of the trip?

Too Long ____ Just Right ____ Not Long Enough ____

6. Do you have any suggestions for future locations in WV to host this trip?

Additional Comments:

APPENDIX E: Sample Media Release Form

Media Recording/Usage Release

For the privilege of participating in activities for West Virginia University, I hereby give my consent for my image and likeness to be videotaped, audiotaped or photographed for the following uses:

- educational/instructional media
- recruitment/outreach media
- development media
- newsworthy media documentation

I further authorize West Virginia University and/or West Virginia University Hospitals Inc., and their component parts, to use this electronic media and/or photographs in any manner – whole or in part.

This waiver includes usage of this media in any way deemed appropriate, which may include electronic and photographic reproductions thereof for the production of educational, instructional, promotional or institutional advancement materials which support the educational and outreach activities of West Virginia University.

I hereby waive any right I may have to inspect or approve any use of this electronic media and/or photographs and I release West Virginia University and its component parts from all liability which could result from its use.

Participant's Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone Number: h) _____ c) _____

Signature (required): _____ **Date:** _____

A parent or guardian must sign this form if the model is a minor or if the model is hindered by mental or physical challenges.

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Signature (required): _____ **Date:** _____

Contact Information:

For questions, please reach out to the following personnel:

For questions about the AHEC Scholars Program, Module Development, Timeline, etc., contact: Jessica Stidham, MA
WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars Program Coordinator
(304) 293-4996.
Jessica.stidham@hsc.wvu.edu

For questions about how to develop your curriculum, or for immersion design and implementation questions, contact: Treah Haggerty, MD
WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars Faculty Liaison
(304) 581-1658
haggertyt@wvumedicine.org

For questions about rural immersion design and implementation, contact: Sandra Pope, MSW
Director, WV AHEC
(304) 347-1216
spope@hsc.wvu.edu