

# Health Advocacy Program: University Partnership Trials and Triumphs

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## Introduction

- The Arc of Philadelphia Health Advocacy Program (HAP) offers healthcare students hands-on educational experiences with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).
- The program's mission is to improve healthcare equity by preparing students across medical, dental, nursing, and rehabilitation programs.
- Students discuss the social determinants of health, barriers to accessing care, and personal biases, and apply these topics to healthcare for people with IDD.

## Background

- People with IDD experience extensive health disparities which are typically linked to reduced access of preventative care and implementation barriers on the individual, organizational, and structural levels. (Sonderlund et al. 2024).
- HAP prepares future healthcare professionals to care for individuals with IDD by filling the gaps in disability education in medical training.
- HAP aims to reduce bias, improve understanding, and promote inclusive care.

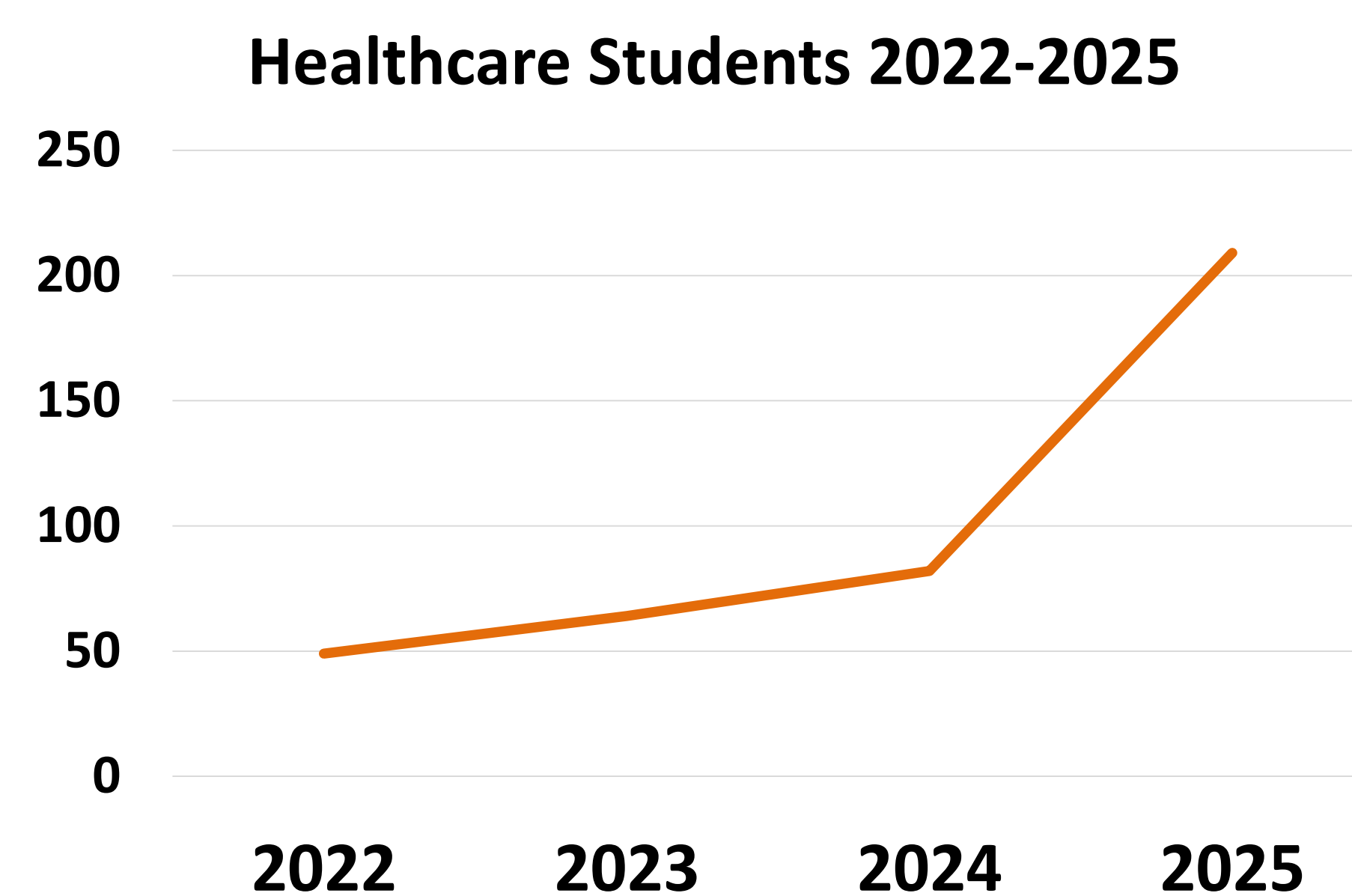
## Method



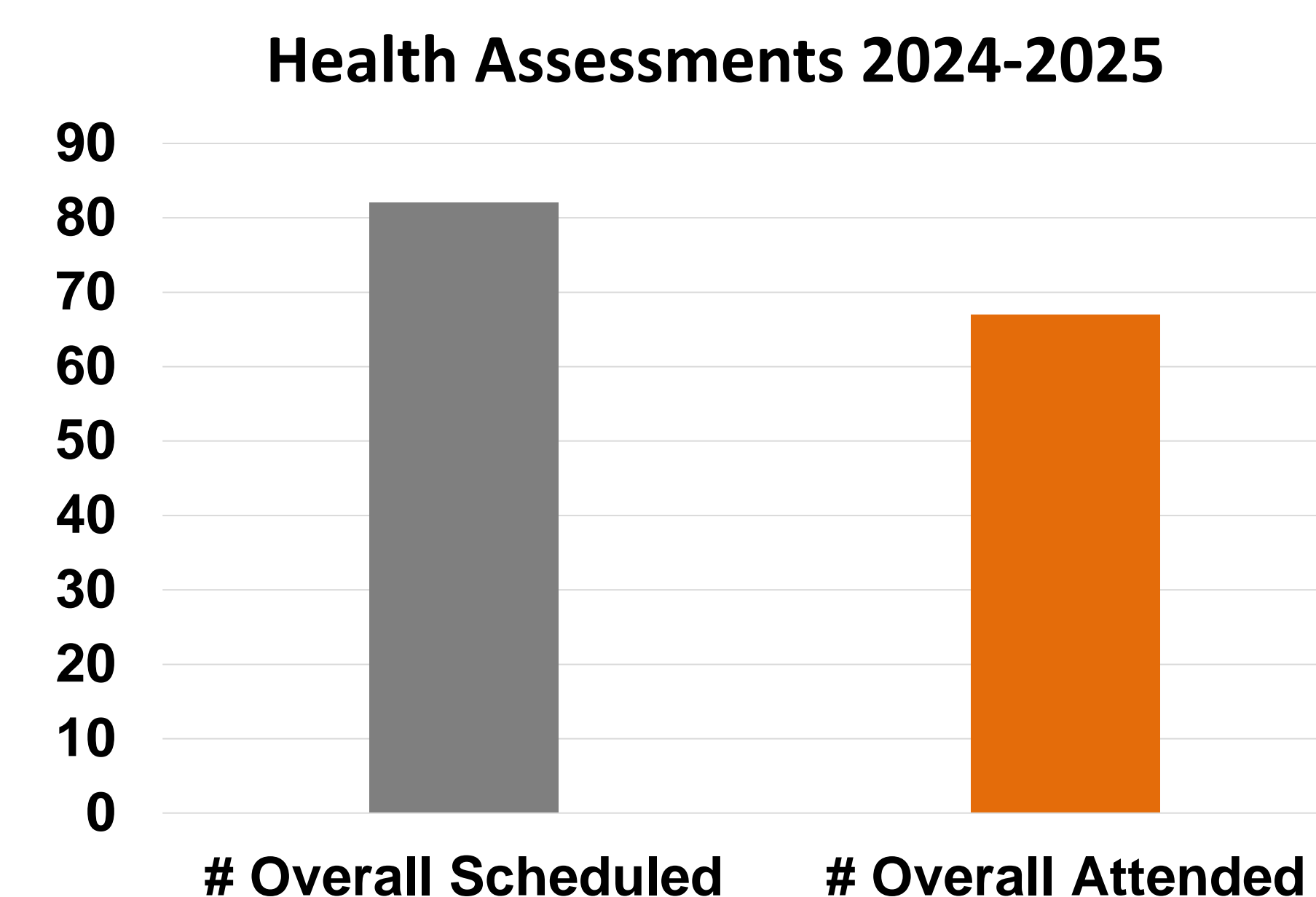
- **Who:** Health professional students from Philadelphia Universities.
- **What:** Evaluated the growth of the HAP.
- **Where:** The Arc of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA.
- **When:** Results presented from 2022 to 2025.
- **How:** Bar graphs were used to visualize yearly comparisons and annual totals.

\*References Available Upon Request

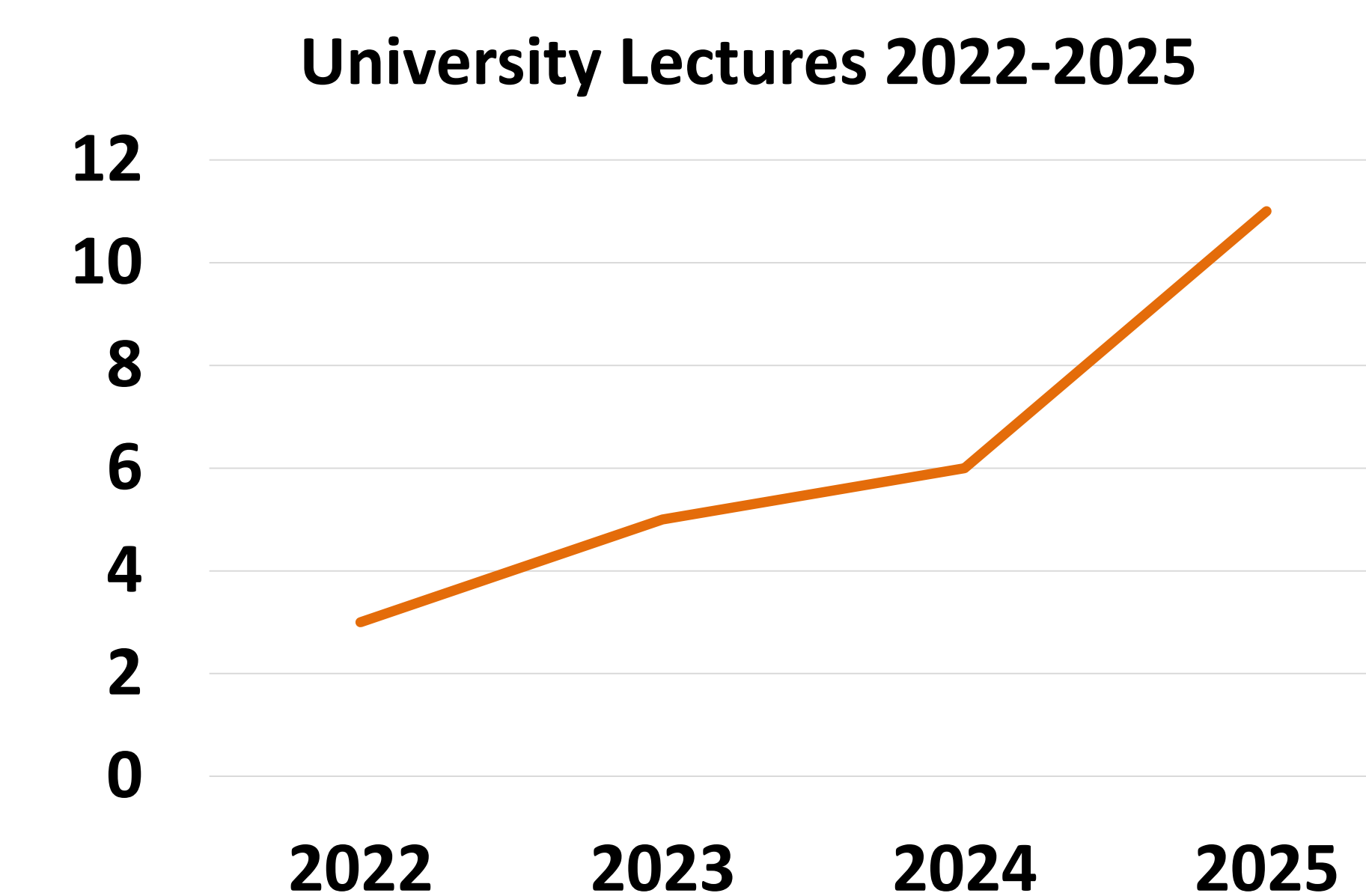
## Quantitative Findings



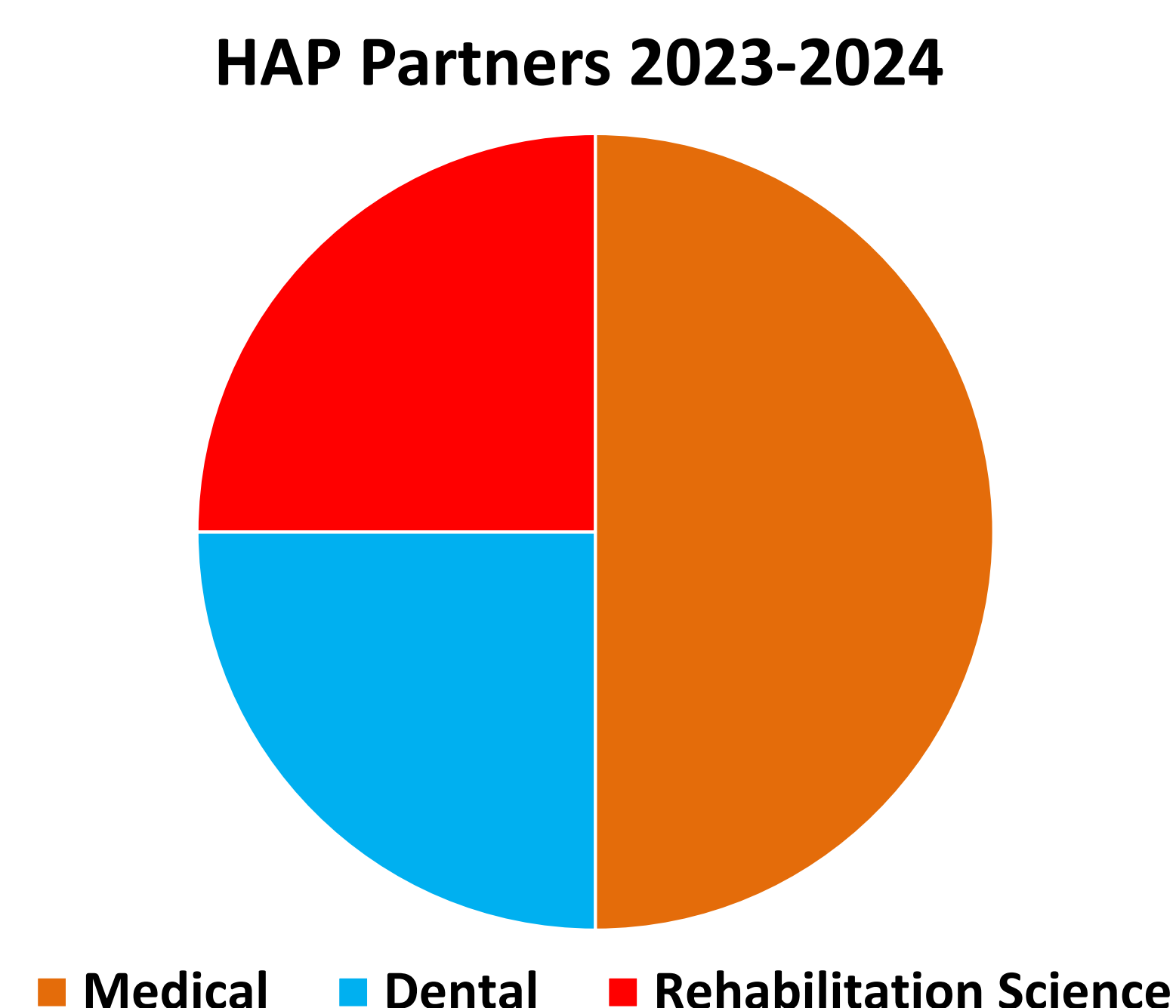
**Figure 1:** The line graph illustrates healthcare student visits from the 2022 academic year to the 2025 academic year.



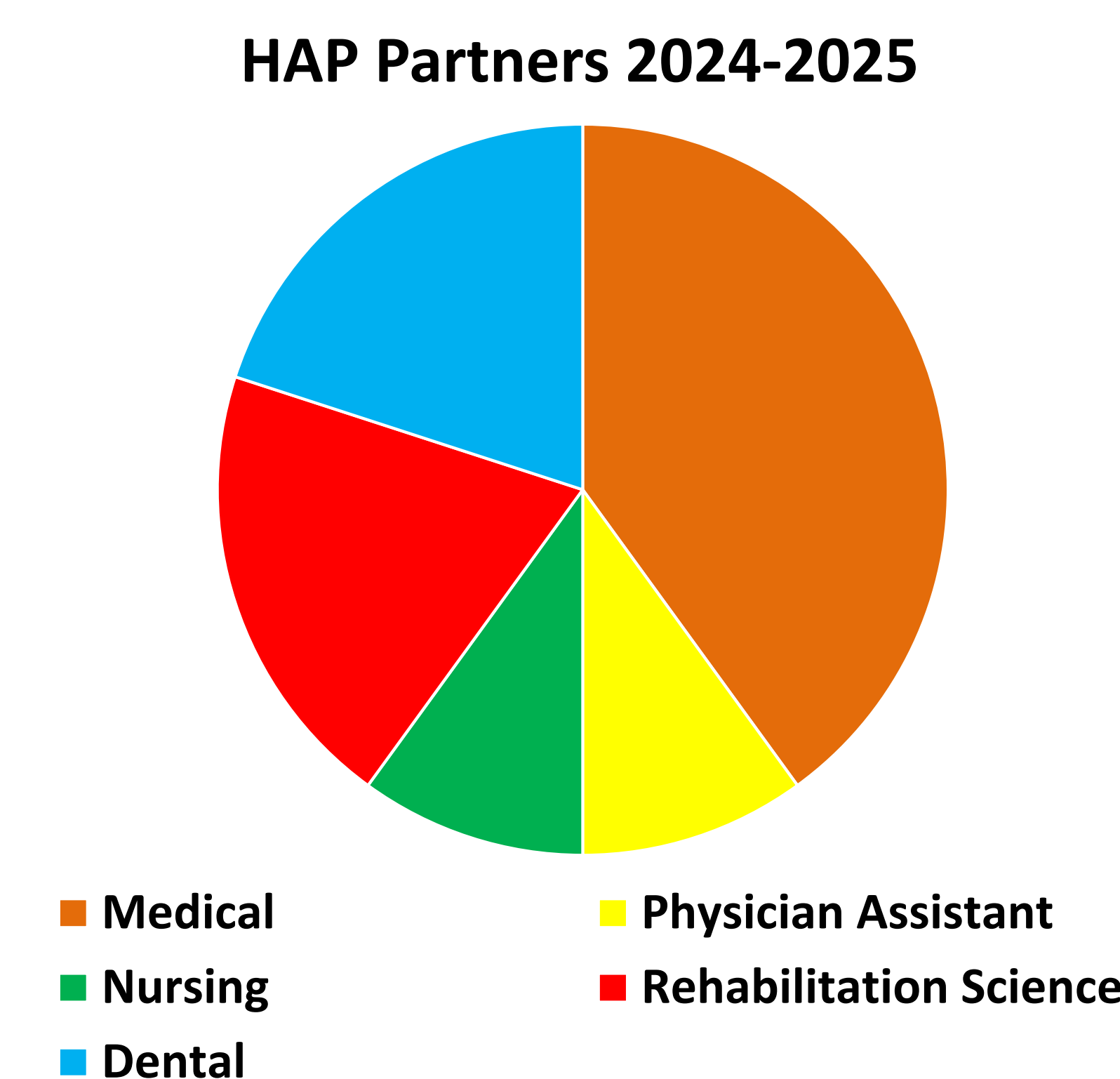
**Figure 2:** During the August 2024 to May 2025 academic year, a total of 82 HAP assessments were scheduled, of which 67 were successfully attended.



**Figure 3:** The line graph illustrates university lectures from the 2022 academic year to the 2025 academic year.



**Figure 4:** The pie chart illustrates the distribution of our academic partnerships in the 2023-2024 academic year, which include two medical schools, one rehabilitation sciences programs, and one dental school.



**Figure 5:** The pie chart illustrates the distribution of our academic partnerships in the 2024-2025 academic year, which include four medical schools, one physician assistant program, one nursing school, two rehabilitation sciences programs, and two dental schools.

## Qualitative Findings: Strengths and Limitations

### Strengths

- Faculty champions who connect the program with curriculum decision-makers.
- New collaborations with different health professional programs in our partnered schools.
- Engaging with passionate students who encourage partnerships within their own schools.
- HAP built into some partners curriculum.

### Limitations

- Program engagement with student led groups, may lack stability and long-term support.
- Class schedules, exams, and breaks limit consistent student participation and volunteering.
- Semester changes in student leaders disrupt continuity and engagement.

## Conclusions and Next Steps

- **Increase Faculty Support:** Build curriculum ties and secure long-term program backing by gaining more faculty champions.
- **Boost Campus Presence:** Attend club fairs, open houses, and student events to raise visibility and understanding of the HAP.
- **Strengthen Engagement:** Foster lasting connections between academics, clubs, student volunteers, and student organization leaders.