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**Working With Communities: Rural and Urban Underserved Program Scholars Take on Broader Health Issues Working with Communities**

Crystal Krabbenhok
Jesse Barnes
A Carolyn Ice
Claire Sava
Tenzin Desel

*See next page for additional authors*

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Authors
Crystal Krabbenhok, Jesse Barnes, A Carolyn Ice, Claire Sava, Tenzin Desel, and Robert Williams

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Why Community Engagement?
Clinicians in medically underserved communities encounter both community-wide health issues and community strengths. Together these raise the opportunities and responsibilities for clinicians to take action outside the clinical exam room to improve health in the community.
Community engagement as part of RUUP aims to provide enjoyable:
- Experience and skills in health/clinical focused community engagement
- Experience contributing to improved well-being in underserved communities
- Experience partnering with communities to advance health goals
- Exploration of meaningful and feasible ways for busy clinicians to engage with communities
Rewarding, meaningful and educational experience in community engagement can come from a variety of types of interactions. Each student brings unique skills, background and interest to this experience. Useful training for all students needs to take this into consideration, offering a variety of opportunities for engagement, while also recognizing that as future clinicians, community engagement in medically underserved communities will generally take one of several forms:
- Health related advocacy
- Volunteer clinical care
- Health education pipeline support
- Non-clinical public health based community work
- Community Health education
RUUP aims to offer students opportunities in each of these categories

Community Projects:

**Health-Related Advocacy**

White Coats for Black and Indigenous Lives: UNM-based racial equity advocacy group with several committees working on particular areas of focus, including admissions, hiring, finances, policy, retention and recruitment, student support and education.

**Health Education Pipeline Support**

Inter-Professional Health Outreach Program (IHOP): run by UNM HSC Office of Diversity, roles in leadership council and as ambassadors doing outreach in various settings.

Big Brothers/Sisters Mentor 2.0: Mentor2.0 is a technology-enhanced one-to-one mentoring program that provides transformative 1:1 support for low-income and first generation high school students to prepare them for high school success, college matriculation and workforce readiness.

**Non-Clinical Public Health-Based Community Work**

Protect NM: student led collaborative effort initially started to collect/distribute PPE during pandemic meets weekly, planning next steps.

Roadrunner Food Bank: group of medical students volunteer each weekend to help with warehouse tasks for safe distribution of food to community members

Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment (COPE): health trainings, and contact tracing work

**Community Health Education**

First Choice Community Health Projects: opportunities for students to volunteer with a variety of projects including healthy cooking online videos and (after pandemic) classes, Development of farm site and community walking trails, collaboration with nearby schools on development of educational curriculum/modules at farm site, collaboration with Roadrunner Food Bank around adding educational/nutritional component to Healthy Food Market food distributions.

**Volunteer Clinical Care**

One Hope Clinic: Volunteer-run medical clinic every Wednesday and one Thursday/month. Opportunities for student involvement in clinic work, research projects and clinical leadership. Spanish not required but Spanish speaking students will get priority for sign-ups due to limited number of interpreters.

Immigration Clinics (at First Choice South Broadway): Once a month: Health and legal physical exam practice, screening for infectious diseases, reviewing vaccination records and ordering appropriate lab tests and vaccines for patients based on immigration needs.

Physicians for Human Rights Asylum Clinics: student-run human rights clinics to provide forensic evaluations for asylum seekers. The clinics are made possible by small groups of enthusiastic students and a growing group of Asylum Network members who are committed to training the next generation of evaluators. Shadowing asylum evaluations not only exposes students to the unique points of view of human rights atrocity survivors but also allows them to observe and practice trauma-informed interviewing and cross-cultural communication.

Albuquerque Heading Home: New Mexico based non-profit that is a Housing First collaboration of public, private and non-profit organizations who worked in 2013 to end homelessness for chronically homeless and medically vulnerable.

Barrett House: shelter and supportive services to women and children experiencing homelessness. Barrett House creates an opportunity for them to get a safety net in place to build the stability they need to start their journey toward securing a home for themselves and their children.

**Challenges**

- The community engagement portion of the Rural and Urban Underserved program started as a group project for everyone to participate. As the group grew we discovered that there were so many different areas of interest we couldn’t identify a single project that they all could agree on.
- Many of the students were already committed to working on projects and student groups that met their interests.
- Amount of school work and the transition from phase to phase hindered the participants ability to commit to activities outside their studies.
- Coordination of different community program needs and tracking of participating interest proved to be very time consuming.
- Covid-19 safety concerns

“Wanting to be engaged in the community was a huge part of my decision to enter medical school. Being involved with community engagement throughout my education has fueled my studies and kept me focused on the broader picture.” - Claire Sava, RUUP Scholar