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Sarah Bouquin

University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center, SJBouquin@salud.unm.edu

Mary Blasl

University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center, MaBlasi@salud.unm.edu

Eleazar Torres

University of New Mexico, College of Pharmacy, EleTorres@salud.unm.edu

Lindsay Fox

University of New Mexico, School of Medicine, lefox@salud.unm.edu

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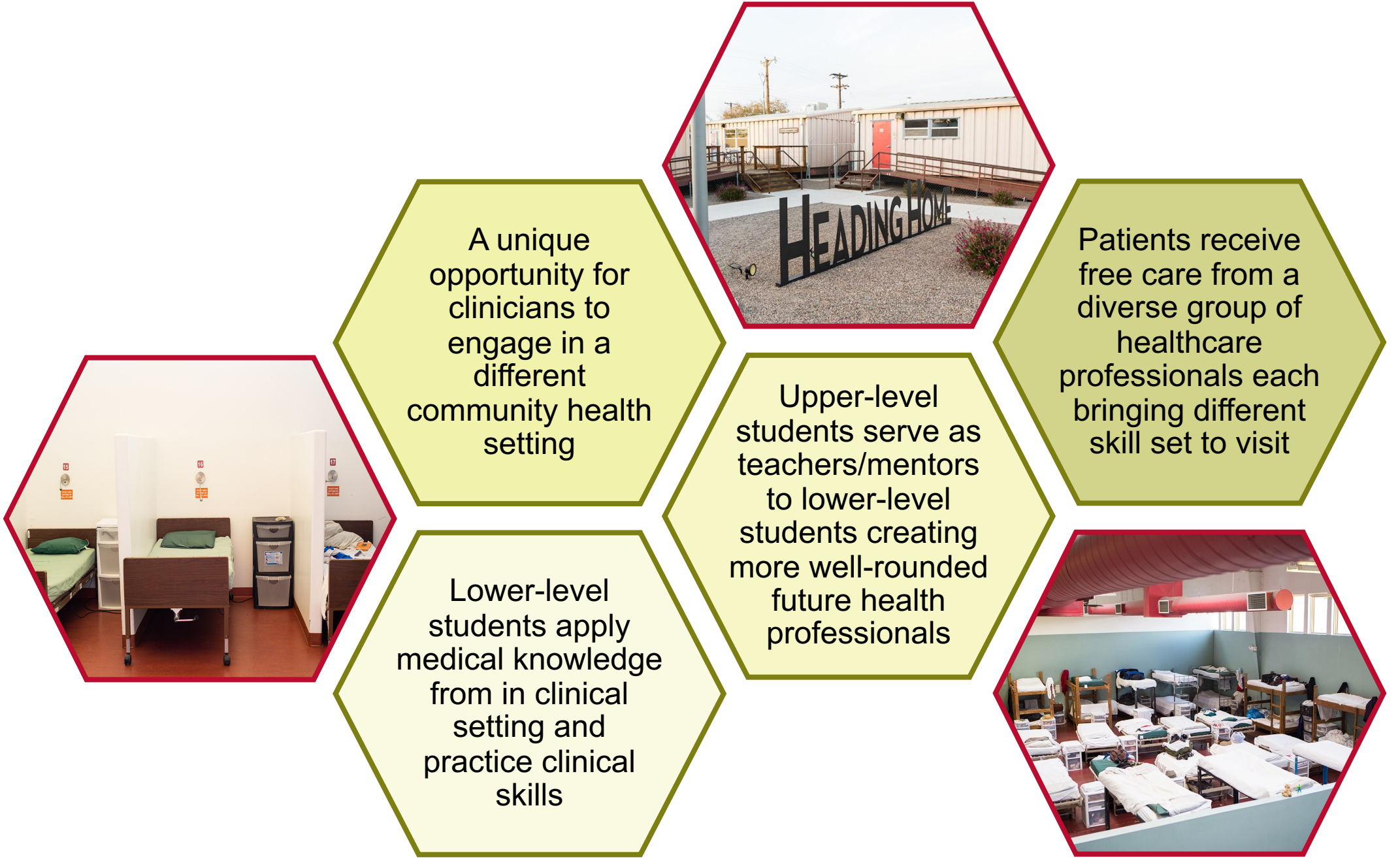
How to Achieve Sustainability at an Interprofessional Student-Run Free Clinic

Authors: Sarah Bouquin MS2, Mary Blasi, MS2, MD Program; Eleazar Torres, P4, Pharm.D. Program; Lindsay Fox, PA-C, Clinical Program Director of Student Outreach Clinics, UNMHSC Interprofessional Faculty

AOC Clinic: Services Delivered by Students

The Albuquerque Opportunity Center (AOC) is an emergency overnight shelter run by the local non-profit, Heading Home. It provides men experiencing homelessness a temporary, safe place to sleep at night, store their belongings during the day, and access wrap-around services.

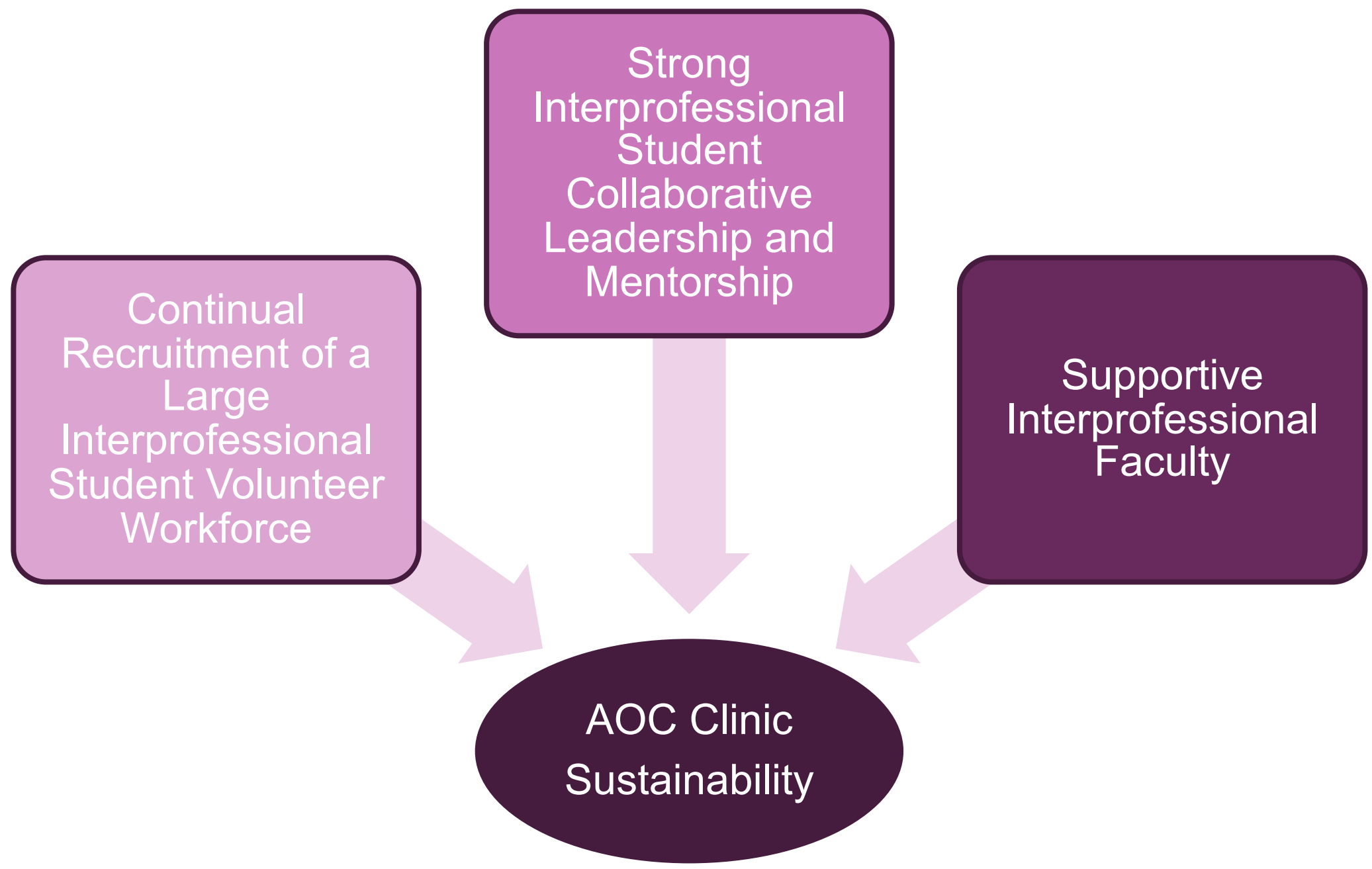
Additionally, the AOC hosts an interprofessional student-run clinic comprised of UNM Health Science students from the medicine, physician assistant, pharmacy, and nursing programs. The clinic runs once weekly, and services are provided at no cost to the individuals staying at the AOC. Hosting the clinic within the shelter reduces access barriers for residents who are often medically complex. Students treat patients, learn from each other, and work as a cohesive team. Each patient seen by the student team is presented to and seen by a medical attending clinician. Volunteering at the AOC clinic prepares students to deliver care in a healthcare environment that is increasingly leaning more towards an interprofessional-based practice.



Challenge of Clinic Sustainability

Student-run organizations face the perennial challenge of maintaining institutional knowledge and consistency given that organizational leadership is constantly changing as students move on to their next phase of training. This is uniquely difficult when the goal of the organization is to provide high-quality medical care for a marginalized patient population. An important goal of the AOC Clinic is to achieve long-term sustainability so many generations of UNM students can benefit from this highly effective learning environment and men experiencing homelessness can continue to rely on the program for accessible medical care.

The AOC Clinic endeavors to achieve sustainability with (1) strong, interprofessional student collaborative leadership and mentorship, (2) continual recruitment of a large interprofessional student volunteer workforce, and (3) supportive interprofessional faculty. Obstacles to sustainability include limited resources, difficulty finding faculty preceptors, and uncertain staffing from student volunteers.



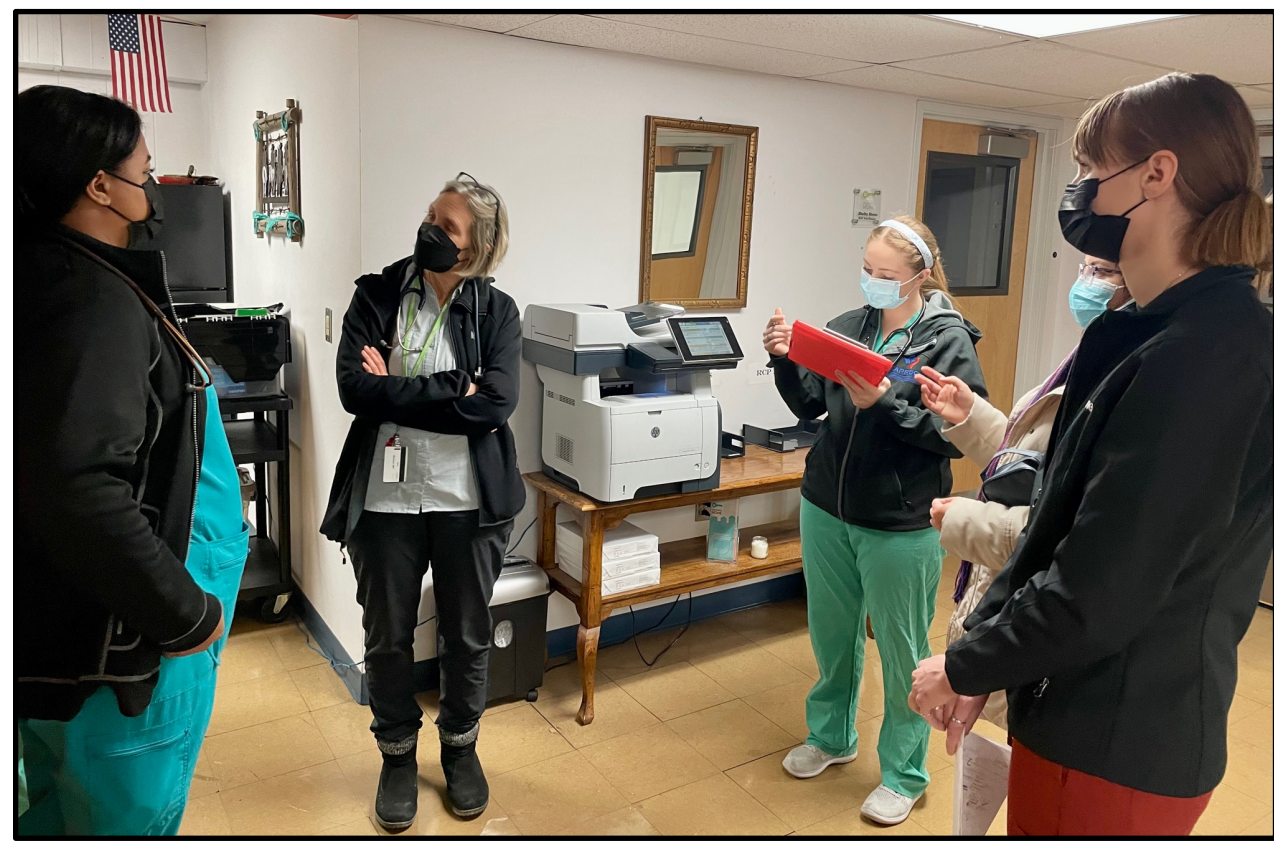
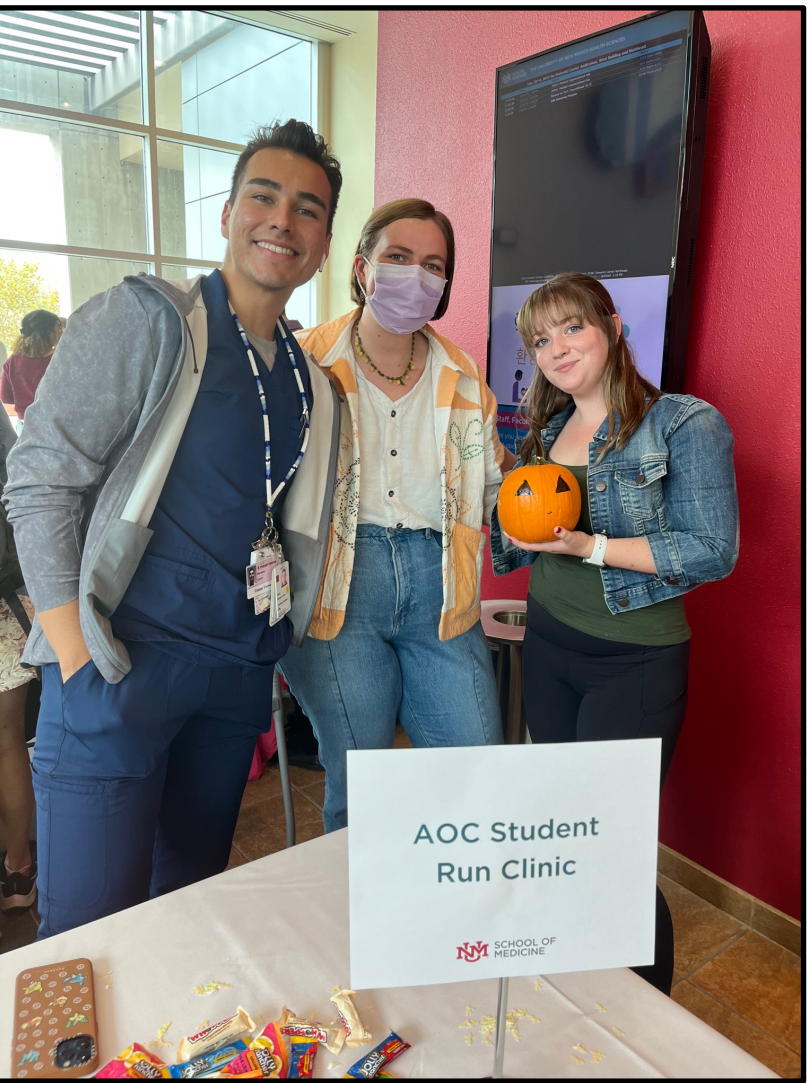
Framework for Sustainability at the Clinic

- (1) *Strong, Interprofessional Student Collaborative Leadership and Mentorship*
Student coordinators lead weekly AOC clinics and engage in long-term strategic planning. The AOC clinic's collaborative leadership model includes student coordinators from each participating program (MD, PA, Pharmacy, and Nursing), with coordinators at various stages within each program. This model promotes stability by developing a cycle of upper-level coordinators overlapping with and mentoring lower-level coordinators. Additionally, it involves students with diverse interprofessional skill sets in clinic operational management.
- (2) *Continual Recruitment of a Large Interprofessional Student Volunteer Workforce*
Student-run free clinics rely principally on volunteer participation from students and faculty which poses a threat to long-term sustainability. One benefit of an interprofessional team is that the pool of potential volunteers spans multiple programs. Additionally, this allows for varying student schedules (ex. away rotations and major exams) to stagger between the different programs so that there is always a degree of availability. Even with a large potential volunteer workforce, the clinic continues to face challenges recruiting upper-level clinical students who often have busy, rotating schedules, uneven student interest amongst different HSC programs, and inconsistent volunteer attendance.
- (3) *Supportive Interprofessional Faculty*
Interprofessional faculty provide guidance and mentorship to the student leadership team and weekly student volunteers. Student-comprised medical teams see patients independently, then present to and collaborate with the attending clinician to formulate the best plan for the patient. Faculty preceptors provide valuable teaching pearls for history taking, physical exam maneuvers, and the case presentation. Student coordinators and volunteers build longitudinal educational relationships with faculty across healthcare professions. Unfortunately, it is a perpetual challenge to recruit volunteer clinicians to give up time in their already saturated schedules.

Future Directions

The AOC Clinic plans to maintain and improve sustainability by expanding the pool of potential faculty preceptors, increasing awareness of the opportunity to volunteer at the AOC within the HSC student community, and accentuating incentives for student volunteers.

The first step towards this goal is to create a path for Emergency Medicine residents to precept in the clinic which will help mitigate preceptor deficits. Additionally, student coordinators will increase outreach to students in all involved HSC programs. Student leadership is working on communicating to student volunteers the importance of their professional role and responsibility in this clinical setting. By setting up a sustainable framework to highlight the importance of free student-run clinics for both academia and the community, it empowers students to continue to renew and solidify their interest and pass it on to future classes.



Acknowledgements



References

Fox L, Nelson J, Hart E, Otero-Bell E, Rogers H. How to Achieve Sustainability at an Interprofessional Student-Run Free Clinic. Lecture: 2022 Student-Run Free Clinic Faculty Association Conference; March 25, 2022.

Program Overview: Albuquerque Opportunity Center (AOC). Heading Home. <https://headinghome.org/programs-overview/albuquerque-opportunity-center-aoc/>.