

The OU Community Health Alliance: A Qualitative Review

Brandon Moritz; Ishak Hossain; Dale Bratzler DO, MPH
University of Oklahoma College of Medicine, Oklahoma City, OK



Introduction

The **OU Community Health Alliance (OUCHA)** is a medical student organization structured within an elective course that aims to better the healthcare system in Oklahoma City. Through volunteerism, we work to **uplift, educate, and empower** patients. OUCHA exposes students to the **challenges of providing healthcare with limited resources**, while developing **more compassionate and empathetic healthcare professionals**.

Importance

- Access to adequate healthcare in **medically underserved areas / populations (MUA/Ps)** is **one of the greatest challenges of public health**.¹
 - Medically underserved includes: low socioeconomic status (SES), low access to healthcare resources and nutrition, and/or no medical insurance coverage.

Goals of the Curriculum²

- Develop a deeper understanding of MUAs and the challenges facing underinsured and uninsured patients
- Strengthen desire to serve MUAs as a future physician
- Provide the skills and learning experiences needed to provide high quality care in low resource settings

Skills Required to Serve the Medically Underserved³

- Identify unexpressed needs
- Appreciate local epidemiologic factors
- Knowledge of community resources
- Advocate for patients
- Recognize cultural and lingual differences

Curriculum

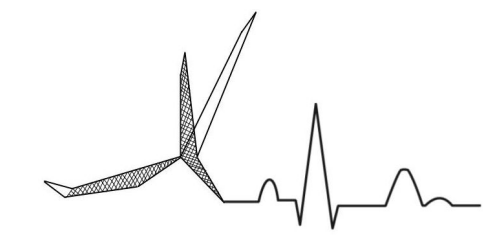
Community Health (CH) I

- 8 Community Involvement Hours
- 12 Health Education Hours
- 60 Clinic Hours
- Reflection Essay

Community Health II

- Completion of CH I requirements
- An additional 20 Clinic Hours

Student Led Initiatives Under Curriculum



Bridges to Access: A student organized conference about barriers in healthcare



Health Dash: An annual 5K that benefits OUCHA's partner clinics



Stop The Bleed: A partnership with OU's Trauma Dpt. to deliver bleed-control training



CARE Workshop: A resource to educate students about caring for underserved populations



Health Fairs: A curriculum for healthy lifestyles for elementary students

OUCHA also approves events by other student interest groups on campus to fulfill credit hour criteria. For the academic year 2018-2019, OUCHA approved 112 student-led events eligible for credit hours.

Clinic Exposure

- **15 free and charitable clinics** in Oklahoma City have partnered with OUCHA to allow students to volunteer
- Students serve **diverse patient populations**, as evidenced by half our partner clinics providing care for primarily Spanish-speaking individuals, two clinics providing care for a large number of Vietnamese individuals, and one clinic providing care for many Muslim individuals
- Outside of primary care, **multiple medical specialty services** are offered by the clinics including: wound care, pain management, OB/GYN, ophthalmology, psychiatry, cardiology, endocrinology, pediatrics, orthopedics, pulmonology, nephrology, and dermatology
- Students also take part in volunteering in **associated pharmacy dispensaries, food pantries, and community centers**

Conclusions

- The OUCHA curriculum has **delivered skills and knowledge** necessary to **successfully navigate caring for underserved populations**
- The OUCHA curriculum has expanded medical students' desire to continue serving with MUCs, with over half **expressing increased interest**
- The OUCHA has created a platform for **students to propose new ideas** to better serve patients and has **provided resources** for students to **lead these new initiatives**
- The curriculum modeled by OUCHA may be **easily replicated** in other medical education institutions to enhance learning **not readily available in a classroom or ward-based setting**

Acknowledgments

We would like to recognize **Marielle Crowells, Katie Gerth, Rachel Jordan, Elizabeth Lanham,** and **Mary Porter** for contributing to data collection. A special thanks is due to the faculty and student leaders who have worked hard to make OUCHA the impactful program that it is today.

References

1. Li, L. B. (1995). Practicing with the urban underserved. A qualitative analysis of motivations, incentives, and disincentives. *Archives of Family Medicine*, 4(2), 124-133. doi: 10.1001/archfam.4.2.124
2. Walker, K. O., Ryan, G., Ramey, R., Nunez, F. L., Beltran, R., Splawn, R. G., & Brown, A. F. (2010). Recruiting and Retaining Primary Care Physicians in Urban Underserved Communities: The Importance of Having a Mission to Serve. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(11), 2168-2175. doi: 10.2105/ajph.2009.181669
3. Reilly, B. M., Schiff, G., & Conway, T. (1998). Part II. Primary care for the medically underserved: Challenges and opportunities. *Disease-a-Month*, 44(7), 320-346. doi: 10.1016/s0011-5029(98)90011-6

Results

Figure 1 Perceived Benefits of the Curriculum

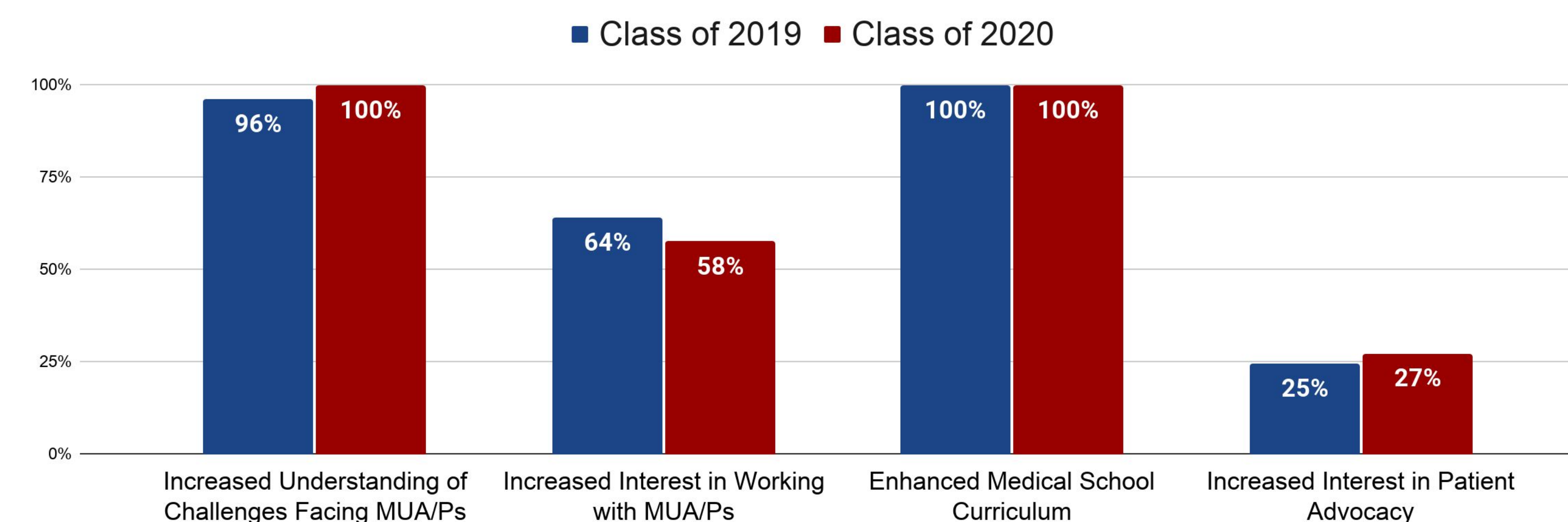
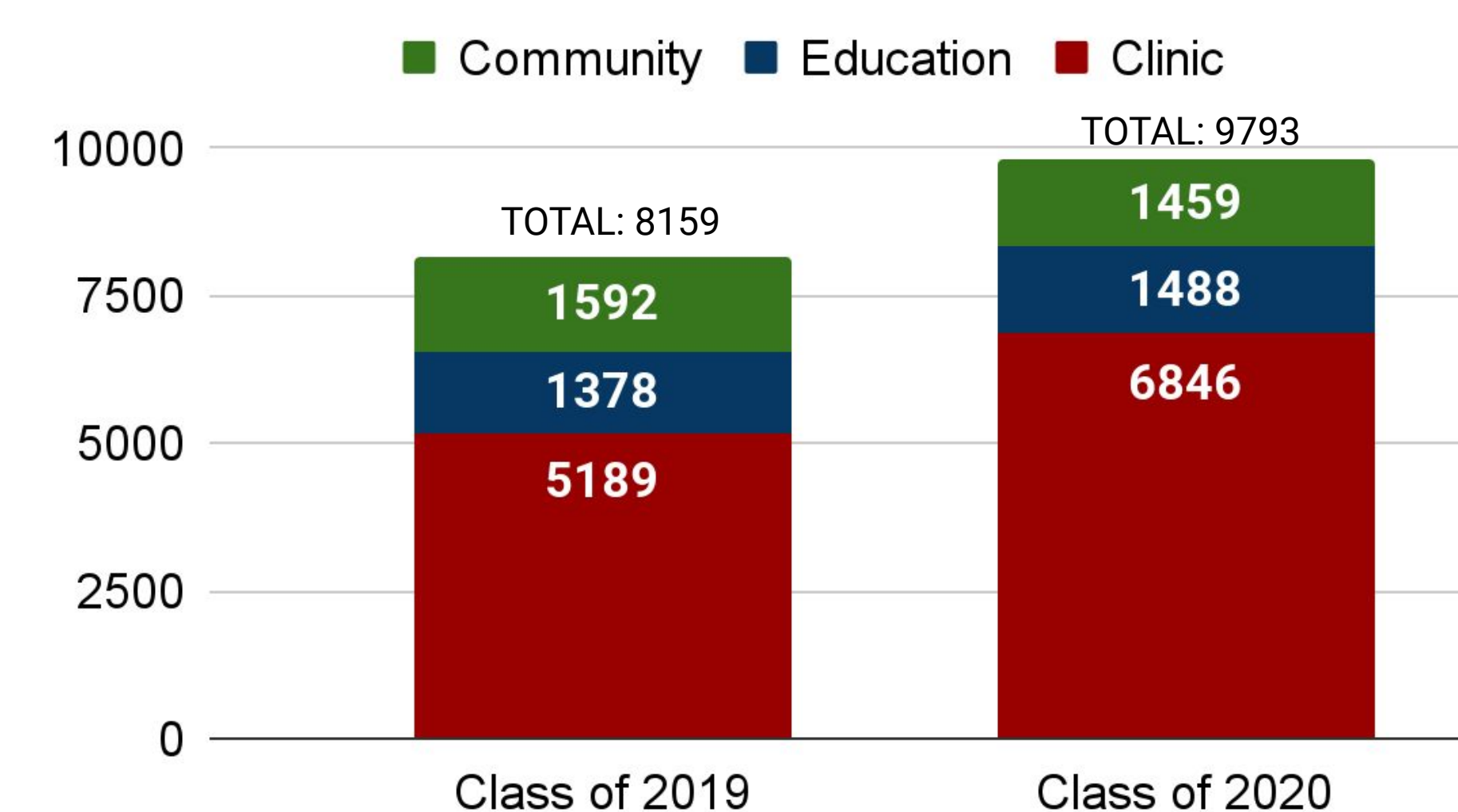


Figure 2 Hours Completed Per Graduating Class



Student Quotes

"My goal in the future is to be a family physician for a rural, underserved community, and I am unsure if I would have come to the same conclusion if I had not had those volunteering opportunities."

"I want to champion for better healthcare access to populations that desperately need care and push for governmental change that helps communities struggling to cover the costs of medicine..."

"The experience, overall, demonstrated that it is not enough to simply know the medicine; in addition, it is absolutely necessary to know your community..."

Figure 1. A group of 7 reviewers completed a qualitative analysis of Class of 2019 and 2020 OUCHA reflection essay (n=119). Each essay was read by two different reviewers and assessed according to four different characteristics: Understanding of Challenges, Interest in Working with MUA/Ps, Enhanced Curriculum, and Increased Interest in Advocacy. **Figure 2.** A report was created of volunteer hour data from OUCHA's student portal for the Class of 2019 and 2020, which shows the total number of community, education and clinic hours completed by each class.