

## **A COLLABORATIVE MODEL FOR INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS**

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**Partners:** University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Public Health (UIC,SPH); Leadership Development Institute (LDI), Chicago State University (CSU); Westside Association for Community Action (WACA)

**Type of Activity: Our collaboration aims at increasing:** 1) interest in health professions among K-12 students; 2) the inclusion of public health aspects, public health sciences and prevention of preventable illnesses in K-12 curriculum; and 3) the recruitment, admission, matriculation, retention and graduation of individuals from underserved populations with graduate and professional degrees in public health. **Collaborative Public Health activities** being implemented include: teacher education, mentoring, assemblies, public health curriculum, public health week commemoration, health science clubs; Saturday Colleges, Summer Science Institutes; College/Graduate Education Articulation Conferences; Summer Residential Enrichment Programs, Pre-Matriculation Programs, SAT, ACT and GRE Review Sessions, Financial Aid and Job Placement Assistance. We are following approximately k-12 students in two cohorts during which we provide them with various activities. At community college (CC) levels, we provide biomedical research exposure and linkage to four year college, jobs and stipends. At 4-year college level, we provide conferences, summer preceptorships, GRE, stipends, mentorship; and, at professional schools, we provide tutorial and review sessions, nurturing, educational and financial support, including internships, preceptorships and job placement.

**Description of Project:** In spite of demographic changes and trends fewer minorities, especially from underserved populations are becoming health professionals. This is further exacerbated by uneven distributions of health professions resulting in continuing disparity in health and disease outcomes. Health Professions Schools and related associations, long faced with challenges on how to increase and maintain diversity in all health professions, have developed a number of programs to address the deficits <sup>(1-4)</sup>. However, many of them have fallen short of expectations while few have shown some good results <sup>(5-8)</sup>. Common among those that have shown good results is the use of pipeline and partnership. However, most have not been able to develop and test the extent to which the comprehensiveness of partnership could contribute to diversity and tangible benefits for partners.

For over ten years, UIC-SPH has been supported by funds from the Division of Health Careers Diversity and Development through the Health Careers Opportunity Program and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and a host of community organizations to develop and implement a program that would implement the activities stated above and subsequently increase the number of students admitted, graduated and join the public health workforce.

To that end, a partnership involving several stake holders was formed with each partner contributing significantly to its success. For instance, UIC provides scientists, researchers, educational settings and funding; CSU provides, tutors, mentors, and space; LDI provides instructions and discussions on cultural competence; and WACA provides community connections, monthly community assemblies and job placement. Our **Evaluation Strategy** involves both process and impact evaluation and focuses on: 1) the processes of collaboration and its impact; 2) understanding the base knowledge of students regarding the impact of supplemental education implemented and their thrust towards public health and other health professions. Impact is done annually and focuses

on establishing the extent to which program implementation produced their intended effects or desired outcomes in each of the objectives and subsequently, in the ultimate goal. We are collecting data at several points along the continuum and are employing several tracking systems to obtain continued information on demography, economic status, family status, number of hours worked, number of dependents, SAT, ACT, GRE, GPA, attendance, and performance in special programs. The project involves students from every strata of educational process such as K-12 ( 2,000), Community College (> 100), 4- year colleges and universities (> 500 students), and professional/Graduate college (>100 ).

**Successes Difficulties and “The Unexpected”:** The results of a ten-year retrospective study of college participants show a significant increase in the graduate and professional degree attainment of participants. More African American and Latino students from under-represented communities are pursuing all areas of health professions and are combining many of them with public health. The results of other longitudinal studies show the following among K-12 students: 1)improvement in performance as measured by standardized test scores, interest in health professions, and performance in pre-post tests; 2) Greater community involvement as measured by interest in health professions and attendance at articulation conferences; 3) Greater teacher interest in public health participation and the inclusion of prevention in curriculum development. Furthermore, at CC, we have been able to bridge science, mathematics and behavioral science students to UIC and ensure their participation in the pipeline to health professions. Benefits to all participants include: awareness of the need to train health professions to address myriad of problems in under-served communities; their empowerment to meet their community needs and the use of grant to leverage other funding to address community needs.

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