Engagement, Leadership, and Wellness:
Evaluating through Inter-professional Service Learning

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ABSTRACT
Numerous studies have indicated the benefits of community involvement for medical students and called for the expansion of such programming to maximize benefits for students.* After creating a growing program to provide community engagement opportunities for medical and professional students and enrollment opportunities for high school students, a study was designed and implemented to assess the benefits of this programming for both groups of learners. The purpose of this study was to assess the outcomes from medical student and physician assistant student participation in the programming, as well as measuring the impact of exposure to the high school students who participated in the summer program. Preliminary results point to benefits for both groups in three primary areas: engagement, leadership, and wellness. These groups were promising in demonstrating parallel benefits to students at multiple points along the educational pathway from high school to professional school.

INTRODUCTION
The Medical Academy, a health career exploration program of the Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine, offers an immersive and interactive learning experience to regional high school youth, while allowing professional students to engage in authentic service learning through their efforts with program planning, teaching, public speaking, and community outreach. The program engages both osteopathic medical students, physician assistant students, and a host of local medical professionals that share their time and career expertise to an engaged group of fifty high school students from across a local metropolitan area.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
- Student leadership through an elected “Medical Academy Scholar” position – designed to fully engage students in planning, implementation, and research opportunities
- Medical and Physician Assistant Student base of volunteers who organize and engage with over 20 high school students across the central Ohio region
- Sessions highlighting the diverse landscape of different healthcare professionals in medicine – including OT, PT, AH, pharmacy, anatomy, and more!

REFERENCES

METHODS
We used a qualitative approach to gather information from participants and students to best understand the meanings and perspectives that students bring to their experiences with the Medical Academy.* Professional Student: One-on-One Interviews Individual students and completed with professional students who had volunteered with the Dublin Medical Academy. Emails were sent to recruit participants and then interviews were offered for their contribution. Interview style was semi-structured using an interview protocol of 10 questions. Twelve total professional student responses were recorded and then transcribed and the data was analyzed.

High School Student: Focus Group Interviews Former participants of the Dublin Medical Academy were invited to participate prior to an established event. The groups were assigned randomly in order of student arrival. 2 groups were formed (one with 6 students, and one group with 4 students). The interview style was semi-structured using a protocol of 6 open ended questions to guide the discussion. These focus groups were led by researchers who asked participants broad, open-ended questions about their experiences with the Dublin Medical Academy. These interviews were then transcribed and analyzed.

RESULTS
Our data indicates that both groups of learners – professional students and high school students – experienced positive outcomes in the following areas: connection & community, knowledge & skills, and purpose & identity. We found evidence of high school students increasing their motivation, drive, and resiliency in pursuing a future career in medicine; professional students honing their communication skills and reigniting their purpose for a career in medicine through teaching and volunteering; and the Medical Academy fostering connection and a sense of community between all the parties involved in the educational program.

Though clear benefits have been demonstrated through our research and assessment of the program, there are still obstacles to be addressed. While the program is designed to spark connections between health professionals and students at all levels, sustaining those relationships remains a challenge. One aspect of the outreach program that has expanded since this study was conducted is a series of activities that are planned throughout the year after the initial summer camp. These activities are meant to continue high school student exposure to healthcare topics and support ongoing connections for the students that can lead to even more meaningful interaction and continued motivation and inspiration. We hope to continue our research and examine the effect of additional programming on the connections and community that are established within the summer program.

Additionally, our data indicates that students are eager for even more inter-professional education, particularly embedded within their medical education, and this is an area where future research would be valuable. Inter-professional education is a challenge for medical education as a whole, but our data indicates that it is a desire of our students, especially as they become aware of the interconnected nature of their future profession. We are confident in the potential for service learning to be one vehicle to inter-professional learning, but we must continue to expand opportunities to connect professional students with one another in their training.