



---

## SERVICE LEARNING AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CERTIFICATE OF DISTINCTION SYLLABUS

---

Leah Hillier, MD  
*Director, Service Learning*  
Community Health Initiative – Phoenix  
University of Arizona, College of Medicine – Phoenix

The University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix recognizes the value of providing ample service learning opportunities within the curriculum to facilitate the development of professional, community - responsive physicians.

According to the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), service learning is defined as a structured learning experience that combines community service with preparation and reflection. Medical students engaged in service learning provide community service in response to community-identified concerns and learn about the context in which service is provided, the connection between their service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens and professionals (standard IS-14-A).

Several studies have linked higher levels of service learning participation and community service with higher class rank and better United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) Step 2 scores, even after controlling for premedical school performance.<sup>1</sup> Though there is no direct evidence that students who participate in formal service learning programs are more likely to be involved in service later in their careers, curriculum based service learning opportunities have been linked to improved leadership skills.<sup>2</sup>

The curriculum will focus on the many different aspects of providing care for underserved patient populations; including patients of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic profiles. Nearly 50 million Americans (and 18% of Arizonans) are uninsured, and another 30 million Americans are underinsured.<sup>3</sup> Patients without insurance are less likely to receive care in all settings except the emergency department.<sup>4</sup> They are less likely to receive recommended preventive services, adequate chronic disease management, appropriate medications for chronic conditions, and potentially life-saving diagnostic and therapeutic interventions.<sup>5</sup> Irrespective of insurance status, disparities in health care and health outcomes persist between patients of different ethnic and racial backgrounds.<sup>6</sup> With this in mind, it seems prudent to offer early opportunities in service learning to provide our future physicians with the skills and tools essential to improving patient care through individual and systems-based approaches.

### Goals

- Identify and support students with a passion for service to the community.
- Increase student and university involvement within our community.
- Encourage self-directed learning by providing appropriate service related experiences.
- Increase exposure to and familiarity with underserved populations.
- Maximize learning about community needs through student participation and reflection.
- Align students with various community engaged physicians.

- Recognize students for their commitment and devotion to service.
- Develop community-responsive physicians who will continue to serve after medical school.
- Instill leadership in students who will more likely become involved in community needs.

### **Admission and eligibility criteria**

- The priority deadline for interested students is the first Friday of August of their first academic year. By individual agreement with the director, late admission to the COD may be granted pending the student's ability to meet the Certificate of Distinction (COD) requirements. All students who apply by the priority deadline will be accepted into the COD-SCH.
- Students shall select a Scholarly Project (SP) topic relevant to community or underserved health. Exceptions can be made on an individual basis, based on student need and alternative project availability, in collaboration with the COD director. Alternative options shall maintain a longitudinal component and should allow for involvement across all four years of the curriculum. See the description of alternative longitudinal projects in the requirements for completion section.
- Failure to adhere to the student code of conduct will render students ineligible for this COD.
- To remain eligible, students must have passing grades in all blocks and courses, and may not receive more than two Level 1 ratings in behavioral competencies.
- Students cannot receive more than one Certificate of Distinction, per [policy](#). Students may choose to pursue both a dual degree and a COD-SCH
- Regardless of participation in the COD-SCH, students are welcome to participate in all CHIP programs and COD-SCH seminars.

### **Course objectives**

#### Patient Care

- Students will refine their skills in caring for patients with varying cultural, socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds; sexual orientation; language; and literacy level.
- Students will be able to formulate a patient plan which takes into consideration the community, social, economic and environmental factors affecting the patient's health.
- Students will be able to identify community and cultural influences which affect the patient's health and adherence to proposed plan of care.
- Students will develop the skills necessary to develop and manage a patient care plan which is culturally acceptable and financially feasible for underserved patients.

#### Medical Knowledge

- Students will develop competency in diagnosing and caring for common illnesses and health-related conditions prevalent in the underserved setting.
- Students will learn strategies for screening and prevention of disease and promotion of health in the underserved setting.

#### Societal Awareness and Responsiveness

- Students will assess the role of health care providers, community health centers, and insurance plans as they relate to patient care.
- Students will become familiar with the resources available to patients within the community and learn to collaborate with allied health personnel and other organizations to provide quality care to patients.

#### Interpersonal Communication

- Students will improve their communication and relationship building skills.

- Students will learn to use shared decision-making models to improve patient care.
- Students will learn to provide patient-centered care with attention to cultural differences, patient values, and patient literacy.
- Students will learn to effectively use interpreters.

#### Professionalism

- Students will demonstrate honesty, integrity, compassion, empathy, and respect in all patient encounters.
- Students will identify their individual strengths and weaknesses, as well as motivations for working with the underserved.

#### Leadership

- Students will identify the difficulties experienced by physicians in providing high quality health care to underserved, uninsured, marginalized and racially diverse patient populations.
- Students will learn to work within a group to identify community needs, develop a plan to meet those needs, and implement appropriate strategies to meet these needs.

#### Critical Appraisal and Quality Improvement

- Students will develop proficiency with available technology and resources to make effective decisions and improve their medical knowledge.
- Students will be able to use evidence-based medicine effectively to aid in diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease.
- Students will learn to review journal articles in order to improve their own personal knowledge in caring for patients in the underserved setting.

#### **Requirements for completion of Certificate of Distinction in Service and Community Health**

- Students will attend a minimum of 15 service learning reflection sessions in total; these may consist of group volunteer activities, didactic sessions with a reflective component, and journal clubs. A minimum of two (2) of these sessions will be journal club presentations where the student will present an intervention and outcomes related to addressing community health issues.
- Students will complete a minimum of 180 service hours through approved service learning Community Health initiative Phoenix (CHIP) programs over four years. Attendance at service learning sessions is not included in service hours.
- Students will complete a Scholarly Project with a focus relevant to the COD-SCH or may complete an approved alternative longitudinal project with an emphasis on service or community health.
- Students should refer to the COD-SCH learning objectives when selecting a suitable Scholarly Project topic. The selected topic must be approved by the COD director and SP director.
- Students will complete a 4-week community health elective during their fourth year. Students may choose from available electives at community health centers (CHCs), safety net hospitals, or sites which provide care for underserved patient populations (i.e., free clinics, Veterans Affairs, correctional medicine, migrant health, etc.). Students may choose from available UArizona College of Medicine–Phoenix electives or may identify away opportunities in conjunction with the COD director and electives team.
- All requirements shall be completed by April 1st of the student's fourth/final year.

## **Alternative Longitudinal Project**

Students may apply for a leadership position in one of the many CHIP service learning programs as an MS1. While this leadership role will be completed midway through MS2 year, students utilizing this alternative project will remain engaged with their CHIP program over the course of the subsequent years during which they will dedicate additional time to help move the goals of the service learning activity or the organization's mission forward. Students may consider completion of a quality improvement project, writing a grant application and providing oversight for fund utilization, serving on the organization's board of directors, or development of new CHIP programming with attention to training, implementation, evaluation, and continual improvement of said project.

## **FOCUS AREAS**

### **CERTIFICATE OF DISTINCTION IN SERVICE & COMMUNITY HEALTH**

Focus areas within the Service and Community Health Certificate of Distinction seek to increase familiarity with caring for specific communities of patients who are more likely to experience health disparities. The program incorporates clinical work at sites that focus on providing healthcare, community-based service experiences, and scholarly work to strengthen students' overall understanding of healthcare disparities unique to that community. The program aims to produce healthcare providers who are sensitive to unique patient needs, can apply academic rigor to scholarly work, and can ultimately improve delivery of inclusive, high-quality care and enhanced health outcomes for members of their target community.

#### **Medical Spanish Focus**

The Medical Spanish Focus within the Service and Community Health Certificate of Distinction focuses on increasing familiarity with caring for native Spanish speakers and enhanced student involvement with the Spanish-speaking community. The program incorporates clinical service at sites that focus on providing healthcare to Spanish speakers, community-based service experiences, and scholarly work to strengthen students' overall understanding of health and healthcare disparities unique to this population. The program aims to produce healthcare providers who are sensitive to the needs of Spanish speakers, can apply academic rigor to scholarly work which serves Spanish speakers, and can ultimately improve delivery of inclusive, high-quality care and enhanced health outcomes for Spanish speakers.

#### Medical Spanish Focus Competencies:

- Recognize the social and structural determinants of physical and mental health that disproportionately affect native Spanish speakers and create barriers to care.
- Acquire and demonstrate a deepened awareness of the cultural diversity found within the Spanish-speaking population, including the history of Spanish speakers in our community and integrate it into patient-centered treatment plans.
- Deliver culturally competent care: communicate effectively in a sensitive, respectful, and confidential manner.
- Develop strategies to address the specific social and structural determinants that Spanish speakers in our community face both during the clinical encounter, and more broadly.
- Advocate for policies and systems that improve health outcomes for native Spanish-speakers in our community.
- Acquire and demonstrate knowledge of specialized Spanish medical vocabulary across a wide spectrum of commonly encountered medical scenarios (history and physical exam, informed consent, patient education).
- Learn how to establish rapport with patients as well as use formal and informal pronouns appropriately.
- Be able to discern when and how to use an interpreter appropriately.
- Optional for students starting with a B1 level of Spanish: acquire certification as a bilingual healthcare provider: <https://www.altalang.com/language-testing/ccla/>

#### **Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity (SOGI) Focus**

The SOGI Focus within the Service and Community Health Certificate of Distinction focuses on increasing familiarity with caring for sexual and gender diverse patients in the urban setting and enhanced student involvement with the LGBTQIA+ community. The program incorporates clinical service at sites that focus on providing healthcare to sexual and gender-diverse people, community-

based service experiences, and scholarly work to strengthen students' overall understanding of health and healthcare disparities unique to this population. The program aims to produce healthcare providers who are sensitive to the needs of sexual and gender-diverse patients, can apply academic rigor to scholarly work which serves sexual and gender-diverse patients, and can ultimately improve delivery of affirming, inclusive, high-quality care and enhanced health outcomes for the LGBTQIA+ community.

#### SOGI Focus Competencies:

- Recognize the social and structural determinants of physical and mental health that disproportionately affect sexual and gender-diverse patients and create barriers to care.
- Deliver culturally competent care by communicating effectively with sexual and gender-diverse patients in a sensitive, respectful, and confidential manner.
- Utilize inclusive, population-specific language when collecting the health history of sexual and gender-diverse patients.
- Perform a culturally sensitive physical exam, including chest and sexual organ examination.
- Craft patient-centered treatment plans, including coordinating care for screening tests, health risk factors, reproductive health issues, hormone replacement therapy and other gender-affirming care topics, utilizing appropriate community health resources.
- Identify structural interventions and areas of advocacy to improve health outcomes for sexual and gender-diverse patients.
- Advance the state of academic research and scholarly work related to LGBTQIA+ Health

#### Focus Requirements

- Students will provide a minimum of one (1) journal club presentation focusing on interventions and outcomes related to health disparities among their focus community.
- Students will complete a minimum of 45 service hours related to their focus community through approved learning (CHIP) programs over four years.
- Students will attend a minimum of two (2) service learning seminars related to their focus community.
- Students will complete a Scholarly Project with a focus relevant to COD-SCH in relation to healthcare topics related to their focus community or may complete an approved alternative longitudinal project with an emphasis on service or community health:
  - Outcome related to their focus community
  - Include a certain percentage of the sample size
  - Outcome can benefit the focus community
- Students will complete a 4 week community health elective during their fourth year
- In addition, the Medical Spanish Focus Area requires an initial test-in to gauge the students' level of Spanish and yearly testing to monitor progress. Beginner students are encouraged to achieve an intermediate level (B1) of Spanish fluency by graduation and must complete the Canopy modules.
- Students who test to an advanced level and wish to enroll must complete a dedicated medical Spanish class taught by a certified bilingual provider and dedicated funding is provided for these students to be certified as bilingual providers at the completion of the course. Service Learning COD students will have priority to enroll in this class. Students not enrolled in the COD will be able to participate in this class if space exists after COD student enrollment.
- All requirements shall be completed by April 1st of the student's fourth/final year.

## Summary of Focus Requirements

Core Requirements for Service Learning COD to be completed over 4 years		Specific requirements applicable to each focus		
		Medical Spanish		SOGI
<b>Seminar Attendance</b>	13 sessions	13 sessions (any topic)	13 sessions (any topic)	13 sessions (any topic)
<b>Journal Club Presentations</b>	2 articles	1 of the 2 articles is Spanish health issues-focused or article itself is presented in Spanish language		1 of the 2 articles is LGBTQI health issues-focused
<b>Service Hours</b>	180 hours	45 of the 180 hours in approved program with Spanish immersion		45 of the 180 hours in approved program serving LGBTQI+ patients
<b>Community Health Elective</b>	4 weeks in 4th year	The 4 <sup>th</sup> year elective is a medical Spanish focused elective		<b>Optional / encouraged</b> The 4 <sup>th</sup> year elective is a LGBTQI - focused clinical elective
<b>Project</b>	<b>EITHER</b> Scholarly Project OR Longitudinal Project	Either project is focused on issue or project which advances Spanish speaking community health		Either project is focused on issue or project which advances LGBTQI+ health
<b>Additional focus requirement</b>		Yearly Spanish level practice test to give you an idea of your level		
<b>Additional focus requirement</b>		Beginner (students starting at an A0 to A2 level)	Advanced (students starting at a B1 or higher level)	
		Complete all 3 Canopy modules with a grade of 90% or better	<b>Optional:</b> Complete Canopy modules at your discretion	
<b>Additional focus requirement</b>		<b>Optional:</b> You have the option to complete a validated test at graduation to document your final level, we encourage obtaining a B1 level of Spanish before graduation from medical school	Complete the medical Spanish course taught by University of Arizona faculty and pass the ALTA Assessment to be certified as a bilingual provider	

## References

1. Blue AV, Geesey ME, Sheridan MEB, and Basco WT. Performance Outcomes Associated with Medical School Community Service. *Acad Med.* 2006; 81(10 Suppl):S79-S82.
2. Goldstein AO, Calleson D, Bearman R, Steiner B, Frasier P, and Slatt L. Teaching Advanced Leadership Skills in Community Service (ALSCS) to Medical Students. *Acad Med.* 2009; 84:754- 764.
3. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2009-2012 Annual Social and Economic Supplements
4. Committee on Quality of Health Care in America. *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.* Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2001.
5. National Research Council. *Care without Coverage: Too Little, Too Late.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2002.
6. Cene CW, Cooper LA. Death Toll from Uncontrolled Blood Pressure in Ethnic Populations: Universal access and Quality Improvement May Not Be Enough. *Ann Fam Med* 2008; 6:486-489.