

Baylor College of Medicine
Second Annual Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Showcase
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Title of Proposal: Improving Health Equity Through a Medical Student Service Learning Program

BCM Mission Area: Community

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Abstract:

The Service Learning Program (SLP) is a voluntary, student-led, year-long volunteering program at Baylor College of Medicine that aims to engage medical students in experiential learning related to social determinants of health. The goal of the program is to increase participants' knowledge about diverse health issues through active and direct participation in the communities of their future patients. SLP aims to help foster an inclusive environment in which future physicians feel more empowered to care for a diverse patient population and promote health equity in their daily practice. The program incorporates three domains: activities that address community-identified concerns, active learning about the population being served, and self-reflection on the experience as it relates to the medical school curriculum and the students' roles as medical professionals. Students from any year in medical school can participate. At the start of the program, students select a learning site that benefits the local community. These sites are nonprofits that address any component of the social determinants of health (i.e. food insecurity, LGBTQ health, incarceration, etc.). With time, it is expected that the students build connections with the site leadership and the community being served. Through this volunteer experience, students actively discover the impact of socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, mental health, limited access to medical care, and other health disparities on overall health. In addition to the service component, the program also requires participation in didactic lectures and/or workshops that further discuss these topics. At the end of each semester, program directors host discussion sessions for participants to engage in self-reflection. Finally, the

program culminates in a poster session at the end of the academic year in which students are given the opportunity to demonstrate and share the knowledge they have gained from their own individual experiences. The expectation is that with successful completion of the program requirements, students can better identify the care gaps and the health needs of underserved communities and feel empowered to advocate and care for their future patients. Program directors hope to improve SLP and foster greater student involvement by expanding the program's outreach and by giving the students the opportunity to develop a community advancement project at their selected site.