“The Healthcare ‘non-system’ is in a state of flux. Everything is on the table for change. In the coming months, years, and decades, clinicians will be looked to for ideas, innovations, and leadership in determining the character and function of a real Healthcare System that can actually serve the needs of all Americans”.

- Dr. Bruce Gould, University of Connecticut Associate Dean for Primary Care
The Evolution of the Urban Service Track

Known as the “land of steady habits,” Connecticut continues to experience significant social and economic changes, especially in its’ major urban communities. These urban centers struggle with high rates of poverty and chronic disease, as well as low rates of educational attainment and college persistence. The issues of access to medical care and health disparities plague Connecticut’s major cities. Coupled with these challenges are Connecticut’s documented workforce shortage of healthcare providers and an increasing dissatisfaction with the practice environment.

The University of Connecticut’s Urban Service Track (UST) was developed as a response to the changing climate and landscape in Connecticut. Its architects envisioned it as a program designed to produce a cadre of well-qualified healthcare professionals committed to serving Connecticut’s urban underserved populations. Drawing on the interest and strength of the CT Area Health Education Center Program (AHEC) and four health professions schools at the University of Connecticut, the UST Program is truly a collaborative effort engaging multiple organizations all dedicated to a strong academic-community partnership. A fifth school, the School of Social Work, will be integrated into UST in 2011-2012. Utilizing a model of interprofessional education and service learning, UST promotes teamwork across health professions, cultural competence as a critical component of patient-centered care, and public service.

Capitalizing on the expertise of clinicians providing care to vulnerable and underserved patients at our Federally Qualified Community Health Centers in the state, an 11-competency curriculum was developed. The competencies include: culture and linguistic appreciation; population health; health policy; advocacy; health care financing and management; leadership and interprofessional team work; utilization of community resources; and quality improvement and patient safety. The formal two-year curriculum is delivered through quarterly Learning Retreats hosted in the communities that UST serves. These three-hour retreats bring Urban Health Scholars from the four disciplines together for focused training sessions that examine the competencies through the lenses of vulnerable populations. These include: urban children and youth; the incarcerated and ex-offender; the homeless; individuals living with HIV/AIDS; the developmentally disabled; refugee and immigrant populations; the elderly and children; substance abusers; and veterans.

In UST’s 2007 pilot program, 24 students enrolled from the four health professions, attending three Learning Retreats, and providing service at four community health events. Since then, UST has grown exponentially significantly increasing the number of student participants, the educational and community research components, and hours of public service. Each year, Urban Health Scholars provide thousands of hours of community service to Connecticut’s neediest communities.

The Urban Service Track is leading the way in creating a pipeline of high quality healthcare providers who value interdisciplinary teamwork and education, as well as culturally competent care for the urban underserved.

What are UST Scholars saying about their experience?

“Through the many opportunities in UST, I have gained invaluable exposure and insight into healthcare for underserved, as well as the importance of collaborating with my colleagues in other health professions.”

“Learning about these different populations and having the opportunity to apply a holistic model of care during the case studies allowed me to enrich my knowledge outside of course work.”

“I love getting to know students from all the schools, learning more about what their schooling involved and what their profession entails. Equally important, working with all the disciplines in each event was a fantastic way to get to know people.”

“CT MOM (Connecticut Mission of Mercy Free Dental Clinic) was the most fulfilling project I have ever been a part of and I will forever remember it. Also, I really enjoyed the Learning Retreats because each of the topics discussed provided me with different insights and perspectives, allowing me to always keep an open mind.”

“I feel a strong connection to the work I am doing, the people I want to serve, and the interdisciplinary team I want to work with.”
Urban Service Track
2011-2012
Resource Guide

Retreat Dates
Cohort Admitted Fall 2010

*September 23, 2011* from 2-6pm
University of CT, Storrs, CT, Ryan Hall
Access, Utilization, and Resources for Immigrant and Refugee Populations

*November 18, 2011* from 2-6pm
ProHealth Physicians, Farmington, CT
Advocacy and Urban Youth

*January 27, 2012* from 2-6pm
SouthEnd Sr Wellness Center, Hartford, CT
Health Care Financing and Incarcerated / Ex-offender Populations

*April 20, 2012* from 2-6pm
Hartford Hospital, Hartford, CT
Professional & Ethical Conduct and HIV/AIDS

Retreat Dates
Cohort Admitted Fall 2011

*October 14, 2011* from 2-6pm
University of CT, Storrs, CT, Ryan Hall
Defining Primary Care, Health Care Disparities & Vulnerable Populations

*December 2, 2011* from 2-6pm
Hartford Hospital, Hartford, CT
Inter-professional Teams and the Homeless

*February 10, 2012* from 2-6pm
Prohealth Physicians, Farmington, CT
Community Resources and the Elderly

*March 2, 2012* from 3-7:30pm
Quinnipiac University, North Haven, CT
Quality Improvement and Veterans
Urban Service Track Faculty and Staff
2011-2012

CT Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program

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Community Service Opportunities

*Spring Forward – Don’t Fall Back– Engage older adults in fall prevention learning activities that are fun and relevant for seniors. Team Lead: Michelle Pheng (Michelle.Pheng@uconn.edu)

*From Wheeze to Breeze– Community education around understanding asthma and COPD, triggers and medications. Team Lead: Sham-sul Arif (Shamsul.Arif@uconn.edu)

*CT Mission of Mercy– March 23-24, 2012, Danbury, CT. Students participate in medical triage, dental clinics and pharmacy. Over 2,000 patients and nearly a million dollars worth of free dental care are provided over the course of two days. 2012 Team Leads: TBD

*KEEP (Kidney Early Evaluation Program)- Students provide blood pressure, blood glucose, pulse, BMI to patients in underserved areas. Over $800 of free testing services are provided to each patient screened. Occur four to five times annually. 2012 Team Leads: Ermir Xhimitiku (Ermir.Xhimitiku@uconn.edu), Sean Ghassem-Zadeh (SGhassem-Zadeh@student.uchc.edu) and Lauren Grandpre (Lgrandpre@student.uchc.edu)

*Healthy Hartford Campaign- Health promotion activities provided to residents of the greater Hartford area. Activities include basic screenings, health education and health promotion, as well as risk assessments. 2012 Team Leads: TBD

*Migrant Farm Worker Clinic - Collaborating with health professions students across the disciplines, Urban Health Scholars see patients with preceptors at the School of Medicine’s ten week Migrant Farm Worker Clinic. Faculty from multiple disciplines precept students in intercollaborative teams. Leads: TBD

*HeartStrong Program– An intergeneration program focused on stroke and heart disease prevention education focusing specifically on the role of nutrition and oral health care in overall health. 2012 Team Lead: Julie McNeish (JMcneish@student.uchc.edu)

*National Primary Care Week- Six community health fairs and clinical primers are supported by UST. Community screenings encompassing blood pressure, blood glucose,and health promotion education including oral health and nutrition. NPCW Day of Service occurs Wednesday, October 19, 2011. Team Leads: see the 2012 NPCW website at http://publichealth.uconn.edu/npcw.php.

*Health Careers Awareness- UST Scholars work with students K-16 through a variety of programs to expose children to opportunities in Health Careers. Programs include Middle School & High School Clinical Skills, Take Your Work Day, College Health Service Corps Symposium, Louis Stokes Alliance Minority Participation, Rowes Scholars, and UConn Public Health and Service Living/Learning Community. 2012 Team Leads: Elizabeth Kaminsky (EKaminsky@student.uchc.edu), Brenna Czudak (Brenna.Czudak@uconn.edu), Kristen Pepin (KPeepin@student.uchc.edu) and Allison Robinson (ARobinson@student.uchc.edu)

*Smiling Seniors- Oral health education provided to older adults that is fun and engaging. Utilizing inter-professional teams of Urban Health Scholars, Smiling Seniors teaches participants proper hygiene techniques as well as the role played medications, nutrition, adaptive appliances and chronic disease in oral health care. Six to eight sessions provided annually. 2012 Team Leads: Christine Crawford (ChCrawford@student.uchc.edu) and Robert Yau (RYau@student.uchc.edu)

*National Association for Community Health Centers (NACHC) Policy and Issues Forum - UST sponsors a group of Scholars are selected to attend the NACHC Conference, March 21-23, 2012 in Washington DC. Students have the opportunity to attend the Forum as well as participate in Hill Visits to state representatives. 2012 Team Lead: Elizabeth Chasse (Echasse@student.uchc.edu)

*Community Garden Initiative- Promoting community gardening, better nutrition and health promotion activities within the Asylum Hill and Northend neighborhoods, Urban Health Scholars work with community agencies and the public to plant, maintain and nurture multiple community gardening beds. Activities begin in the Spring and culminate early Fall. 2012 Team Leads: Sarah Dougherty (SDougherty@uchc.edu), Barbara Ruf (BRuf@student.uchc.edu) and Allison Robinson (ARobinson@student.uchc.edu)

*Hispanic Senior Center- Utilizing Spanish language skills, students provide special health promotion and fun activities with older adults at the Hispanic Senior Center of Hartford. Activities run the gamut from holiday treats for diabetics, oral health and pharmacy education, to bingo! Team Lead: John Paul Shoup (JShoup@student.uchc.edu) and Elizabeth Flatley (Elizabeth.Flatley@uconn.edu)

*CCMC/UCHC HIV/Peds/Family Holiday Social– Join families/children for the annual holiday social by coordinating arts and crafts activities. Team Lead: Wenhui Sun (Wsun@student.uchc.edu) and Paulina Gorecki (paulina.gorecki@uconn.edu)

*Pathways Sendaros Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program– Working with the Pathways Sendaros staff to deliver health careers awareness programming for 6th-12th graders after school. Topics vary. Team Leads: Elizabeth Chasse (Echasse@student.uchc.edu), Robert Yau (RYau@student.uchc.edu) and Kristen Pepin (KPeepin@student.uchc.edu).
For more information about UST and its affiliates please visit:

Urban Service Track
http://publichealth.uconn.edu/aboutus_ust.php

UConn School of Pharmacy
http://pharmacy.uconn.edu

UConn School of Medicine
http://medicine.uconn.edu

Quinnipiac University
http://www.quinnipiac.edu/

UConn School of Dental Medicine
http://sdm.uconn.edu

Connecticut Area Health Education Center
http://ctahec.uconn.edu

UConn School of Nursing
http://www.nursing.uconn.edu

National Kidney Foundation of CT
www.kidneycf.org

UConn Center for Public Health and Health Policy
http://publichealth.uconn.edu/aboutus.php