UIC URBAN HEALTH CLUB
A (virtual) health career exposure program for Chicagoland high school youth.
A CASE STUDY

KEY POINTS

The Urban Health Club (UHC) is a health career exposure and academic enrichment school year (SY) program for disadvantaged Chicagoland high school youth.

- UHC is a student-led effort comprised of UIC/UIUC pre-health undergraduate and health professional students.
- Core partners include the UIC School of Public Health, Hispanic Center of Excellence, College of Medicine Emergency Medicine Interest Group, UI Health Emergency Medicine Residents, and UI Health Volunteers.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted UHC to an online format; our public health curriculum emphasizes health inequities and social justice.
- During SY 2020-21, a total of 35 online sessions were implemented, serving 76 participants.

ISSUES & CHALLENGES

The Urban Health Club (UHC) aspires to be a source of continuous learning, engagement, and (virtual) belonging for disadvantaged Chicagoland youth.

In March 2020, due to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, UHC shifted from in-person programming to a synchronous virtual format, but not without limitations and barriers. Technological challenges include redesigning curriculum delivery, abruptly adjusting to e-learning, and participants’ limited or lack of technology and wifi access. Engaging participants in virtual extracurricular activities is difficult as youth are already dealing with multiple challenges that come with e-learning.

Chicago Public School (CPS) disadvantaged students face critical academic access barriers and subsequent health inequities. During School Year (SY) 2020-21, CPS reported that district-wide, two-thirds of students were “Economically Disadvantaged Students.”

79.3% 76 43.4%
CPS students Total SY 2020-21 participants Will be first generation college students
THE URBAN HEALTH CLUB APPROACH

The UIC Urban Health Club (UHC) is a school-year program that aims to expose high school participants (9-12th grade) to health careers and career pathways, prepare participants for the college application process, and motivate them to pursue a health career.

In light of COVID-19, UHC is committed to creating an online curriculum platform accessible to high school students interested in learning about health careers and the health sciences. UHC will continue to be implemented virtually until further notice. UHC is entirely funded by the UIC Urban Health Program.

Our UHC curriculum covers: 1) Health careers exposure and health sciences; 2) College readiness & professional skills development; 3) Public health & civic engagement. UHC program coordinators consist of University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) pre-health undergraduate students and medical students. UHC also collaborates with UI Health Emergency Medicine residents who serve as program mentors and curriculum consultants.

THE SOCIAL JUSTICE SERIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted a crucial need for having discussions around health inequities, social advocacy, and community productive power.

Empowering youth via peer action while equipping them with knowledge, skills, and (virtual) tools can be an impactful way to respond to contextual challenges exacerbated by the pandemic.

THE COVID-19 MYTHBUSTERS SERIES

Our goal with the COVID-19 Mythbusters series was to empower youth to disseminate culturally responsive COVID-19 health education messages.

Lessons learned from this series have been used as foundations for the development of a multi-stage COVID-19 Youth Ambassador Program in coordination with the Illinois Department of Public Health’s existing Illinois COVID-19 Ambassadors program and partners from the West Side United Internship & Apprenticeship Working Group, a consortium of Chicago hospitals offering youth workforce development and health career exposure opportunities.
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PARTICIPANT PROFILE

- Total participants: 76
- 82% Female | 18% Male
- 13% African American | 79% Hispanic/Latinx
- Predominant Chicago zip codes & neighborhoods:
  - 60608 | Lower West Side
  - 60623 | Little Village
  - 60639 | Hanson Park

COLLEGE-BOUND SENIORS

- UIC 38.9%
- UIUC 5.6%
- Other 50%

NEXT STEPS

UHC has evolved into a collaborative and multidisciplinary effort examining critical public health topics while encouraging program participants to pursue health professions and become community health leaders. Program evaluation will guide future implementation design, as well as indicate points of improvement.

ENGAGE WITH US

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