

College for Healthy Communities & the Under-Served (CHC-U) Why, What, How Can Our Health Center Become Involved?

Why CHC-U?

Clinical workforce demand in health centers is at an all-time high and the competition for the current supply is intense. Clinicians trained in settings other than health centers frequently lack the necessary core competencies to step right in and serve on interprofessional primary care teams in health centers. Research demonstrates clinicians are more likely to remain in the systems where they trained. Addressing the clinical workforce needs of health centers will require a variety of approaches to “grow our own” competent healers who are:

- ✓ Committed to community-responsive practice
- ✓ Focused on prevention
- ✓ Data savvy
- ✓ Skilled at team approaches to chronic care management
- ✓ Culturally competent
- ✓ Professional
- ✓ Understand the impact of the social determinants of health
- ✓ Passionate about serving those most in need.

An essential component of every health center’s retention and recruitment strategy must be career development. The first step is identifying promising individuals from your community. They may already be working at your health center and looking for professional development on the career ladder. They may have expressed an interest in becoming a healer serving the underserved. “Growing our own” involves helping these individuals take advantage of training opportunities that help them realize their dreams.

CHC-U is an additional building block to the National Association of Community Health Centers’ (NACHC) and A.T. Still University’s (ATSU) “growing our own” alliance. To-date, this alliance has resulted in the Arizona School of Dental and Oral Health (ASDOH), School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona (SOMA), Missouri School of Dental and Oral Health (MOSDOH), health center based medical residencies, and over 60% of the ATSU PA program currently receiving their second/clinical year at health center campuses across the country. This successful alliance provides a strong foundation upon which to add another “growing our own” component, CHC-U.

What is CHC-U?

Health care systems across the country are developing their own schools and programs to train a workforce with the competencies desired by their system. CHC-U is a unique model to train a workforce specifically for health centers. Long-standing institutions are driven by their major areas of focus. For NACHC this is advocacy, and for ATSU this is education. CHC-U has a sole focus on educating needed clinical workforce members for health centers. Driven by

[*Assuring the National Safety-Net’s Supply of Compassionate, Community-Minded Healers*](#)

and for health centers and the health center movement, CHC-U can facilitate innovative change and provide radical solutions to the current and emerging clinical workforce needs at health centers.

CHC-U is a private not-for-profit, 501(c)3 Arizona corporation governed by a Board of Directors. The current CHC-U Executive Committee consists of Tom Curtin, MD, President; Eligio G. White, Vice-President/Treasurer; and Ron Yee, MD, Secretary. The current Board consist of James Hunt, PhD, Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, President and CEO; Dave Taylor, NACHC, COO; Joe Pierle, Missouri Primary Care Association, CEO; and Nancy J. Johnson, RN, PhD, El Rio Community Health Center, CEO. Formed through a collaboration with the NACHC and ATSU, CHC-U is an educational entity solely committed to responding to the needs of health centers. CHC-U will educate the next generation of clinical team members with the competencies necessary to improve the health of underserved communities and vulnerable populations. CHC-U's first endeavor is a physician assistant (PA) program that will apply a learning model, based on cognitive science findings and proven competency-based educational strategies. A central principle of this model is that concepts are best understood and remembered when practiced in the setting for which they were developed. Thus, the CHC-U model has as its foundation a national network of high-tech, high-touch service-education health center community campuses.

How can our health center become involved?

Currently, CHC-U is looking for 20-25 health center campuses / consortia that are committed to serving as the yearlong educational home for five second-year PA students in 2021 and each year thereafter. Just like health centers, CHC-U programs will be community-driven. Each participating health center campus / consortia will have representation on the PA Program Steering Committee that will be involved with the development and implementation of this innovative PA training model.

If serving as a CHC-U health center campus is not possible, you still have a role to play. Everyone in the health center movement needs to identify "healers in waiting" and work with them to assure they are prepared for the next step in their professional journey.

If your health center would like to learn more about this opportunity to "grow our own", please contact the CHC-U Team at CHCU@nachc.com to schedule a telephone conversation.