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*Impact Statement*  
*Tuskegee Area Health Education Center: Health College Connections*  
*Program 2020*  
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SITUATION:

There are significant shortages in healthcare professions across the United States. The National Institute of Health concludes this shortage to be fostered by the aging of baby boomers and the high numbers of retiring medical professionals. Whatever the cause, statistics from the Bureau of Labor indicate that health care jobs are going to grow more than twice as fast as non-health care jobs in the next decade (Center for Health Workforce Studies et al., 2008). This shortage and anticipated growth can be a rewarding phenomenon for rural communities especially those in the Black Belt of Alabama.

Studies concerning the health of populations have shown that inequalities within communities have been linked to socioeconomic disparities (Cromley, 2003; McLafferty, 2003). Socioeconomic status affects the overall human functioning and low socio-economic statuses directly correlate with lower educational achievement, poverty and poor health, ultimately affecting our entire society (American Psychological Association, 2007). Statistically, in 2017, the per capita personal income for all of Alabama was 79% of the national U.S. average, ranking 46 out of 50 states and D.C., and one in six Alabamians currently live below the federal poverty line (Bureau of Econ. Analysis, 2018). The state poverty rate of 19% is higher than the national rate of 15.9%, however, that rate escalates to 30% and higher in the Alabama Black Belt. (Auburn University, 2014). Nine of the ten poorest counties in Alabama are in the Black Belt, with an average estimated per capita income in 2010 of \$15,826.28 (United States Census, 2019).

The shortages of healthcare professionals coupled with the growing competition for qualifications promote employers to offer attractive benefits to employees. The benefits that healthcare professions provide could promote an upward trend on the socioeconomic status of Black Belt communities. If the socioeconomic status of communities increases, there will likely be a decrease in the disparities associated with lower socio-economic statuses.

Furthermore, to maintain a healthy rural community proper preparation and supply of rural health workforce is necessary.

## RESPONSE

Health College Connections was developed to introduce high school students to health professions. The program is usually conducted in a tactile environment where students can immerse themselves into the overall experiences of health care professionals. The global pandemic forced the logistical shifting of the program and for the curriculum to be modified for the 2020 delivery. Participants were for the program were solicited in three Black Belt counties, Lowndes, Bullock and Macon. Although extensive recruitment was conducted, only three participants were secured. Two participants completed the entirety of the 7-day program although it started with three. This low number can be contributed to the environmental climate, i.e., (weather and connectivity). Participants were engaged in a virtual setting over a course of seven days for two hours per day, using the Google platform and Study.com. Study.com is a virtual learning platform that provides an engaging and efficient way to help students acquire information and provides quizzes, courses and immediate feedback. The program was facilitated by the Educational Specialist with the intent of meeting three (3) specific objectives:

1. Students will explore career opportunities in the healthcare industry
2. Students will prepare for college course of study in healthcare careers
3. Students will develop personal and professional goals and skills.

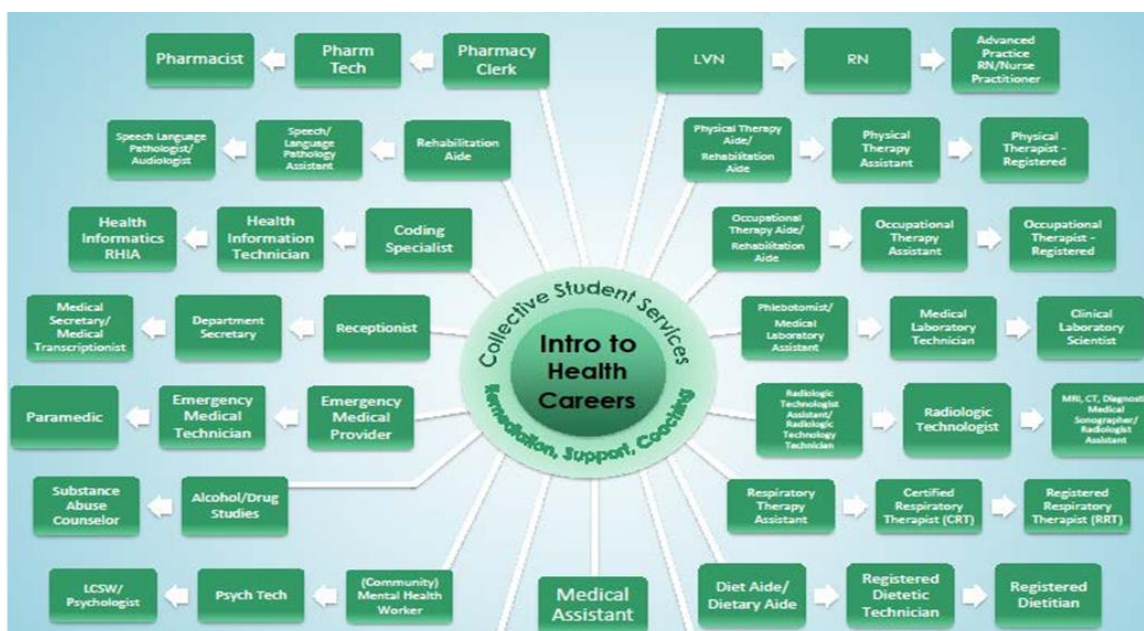
### *Day 1: "Prepared People are Propelled into Their Purpose!"*

Students were introduced to each other and the facilitators of the program. A pretest was administered to participants to assess students' knowledge of the anticipated content to be delivered. An icebreaker, "Childhood Dream," was presented to participants requiring them to tell the group their childhood dream and how it related to their current dreams. Answers ranged from, "Being a professional athlete to becoming a chef." The goal of the icebreaker was to give the students and opportunity think passionately about their visions and discuss how those dreams could ultimately play a role in the healthcare industry as it can accommodate nearly every passion. For example, a chef ties into dietetics and a professional athlete can directly relate to physical therapy and an athletic trainer. An overview of the

program objectives, expectations and logistics was provided along with their invitation to (Study.com) a video and instructional platform. Students were given the opportunity to ask questions and any comments or concerns were addressed.

Day One content began with the concepts of Health and Wellness. To meet the outlined objectives of the Health College Connection program, it is imperative for participants to first understand that health is, "A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease (WHO, 1948)," and it is different than wellness which is, "the optimal state of health of individuals and groups (WHO, 2006). Students were delivered virtual lessons through the Study.com platform titled, "Health and Wellness Definitions and Dimensions and, Health Services-Definitions/Types/Providers," and a timed game was played on the platform upon completion to reinforce the lessons. Healthcare, healthcare teams and health sciences were defined, and discussions ensued about the dynamics of health care and the health care system. Allied Health Professions were introduced in the second half of the session to provide an overview of the third largest and most diverse professionals in the healthcare industry. In addition to the Study.com platform a Career One Stop video titled, "Careers and Pathways of Health Sciences," was presented. A career success map was presented to students and they were able to track various paths in health careers.

Figure 1: Career Success Map



*Day 2: "Does the walker choose the path, or path the walker?"*

Upon entrance into the session students were assigned Knowledge Check 1. The assessment was to measure Objective 1. One hundred percent of the participants were able to identify 20 healthcare professions. Students were introduced to the concept of direct and indirect patient care. Students compared the two different types of occupations and the skills required to provide these levels of care. Students were introduced to the five (5) healthcare pathways, therapeutic services, diagnostic services, health informatics, support services and, biotechnology research and development. Four of the five pathways were presented by TAHEC Interim Director, Dr. Cheryl Davis while biotechnology research and development, was presented by Dr. Michael Henderson.

*Day 3: "Find out what you like doing best and get someone to pay you for doing it."*

\*\*Day 3 and Day 4 of the Health College Connection program was cancelled due to inclement weather and countywide internet outages. The content from these lessons was delivered through extended sessions on the remaining days. During these interruptions the program lost one student.

*Day 4: "The race is not given, to the swift nor to the strong, but to the one that endures until the end"*

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*Day 5: "Never give up because Great things take time!"*

Day 5 began with Knowledge Check 2 to assess the students' knowledge of objectives 1 and 3. Students were then administered and completed the O\*NET career interest profiler through, Mynextmove.org to find out what their interests are and how they can relate to the world of healthcare and decide what type of careers they might want to explore. Upon completion of the profiler, the students shared their results with group and 100 percent of participants were able to successfully align each of their interests with a healthcare pathway.

Students explored different ways that they can explore healthcare careers and identified, "Programs like Health College Connections," as a route that can be taken to do so.

Participants viewed a health sciences movie created by Montgomery College that depicted each level of healthcare, to provide students with an inside view each component of the healthcare team and the role that they play.

Educational Requirements for multiple types of occupations were explored. Students were able to identify careers that require minimal, moderate and advanced schooling. Programs that provide different levels of education such as, vocational schools, community colleges, and 4-year institutions. The fact that some careers in healthcare require no schooling beyond high school diploma was also addressed. Participants were asked to choose a healthcare profession that they would be interested in pursuing. The choices were, ARNP (Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner) and Physical Therapy. Once the students were able to identify a career track that appealed to them, we again utilized Mynextmove.org to research the educational path that would be required to attain such a career. After determining the educational requirements for each students' path, careers outlook and salary were explored through the same online portal. Students were assigned their final project for the program to assess their acquisition of the concepts that were aimed to be delivered. The requirements were to identify a healthcare career that was of interest to them and develop a creative way to share their roadmap to securing it.

**Please include the following about your chosen career:**

- Definition of Occupation
- Scope of Work
- Average Salary of that Occupation
- Job Outlook

**Answer the following Questions:**

- What role does this occupation play in the Health Care Team?
- Is this occupation a part of the Community Health Team or the Hospital Team?
- Is this an Allied Health Profession?
- Which Level of Health Professional is this career aligned with? (Direct or Indirect Patient Care)
- What category of Health Care Pathways does this career align? (Therapeutic, Diagnostic, Health Informatics, Support Services, Biotechnology Research and Development?)
- What certification is needed to be able to obtain this job?
- What are examples of required classes to obtain the certifications or requirements needed to secure this job?
- Where do you go to obtain the requirements?
- What are your plans with the career choice? Do you intend to stay in this role indefinitely or eventually pursue other roles? If you intend to transition, describe how that transition looks.
- How do your interests align with the chosen career path?
- What skills are required for you to be successful in this career?

*Day 6: "The nations morals are like its teeth, the more decayed they are the more it hurts to touch them"*

Day six began with an introduction to Health Informatics and Ethics. The discussion was followed up with a Study.com lesson. After a review was done on each of the topics of the program topics. Any questions that students had on their final projects or any area that was covered was addressed.

Three guest speakers were procured to speak with the students about careers that align with their chosen track. Charlene Portee, PT, PhD, FAAPT, Interim Director, Department of Physical Therapy, Alabama State University presented on the process of entry into a PT program, salary, job outlook, preparation for admissions and skills needed to secure a career as a Physical Therapist. Choona Lang, RN, BSN, MHA, DHEd, Homecare Division Director of Home and Community Services, Alabama Department of Public Health was on schedule to present and was unable to connect. The presentations continued with Jannette Lewis Clark, OTR/L, OTD, CLT, Department Head of Allied Health; Interim Program Director, Occupational Therapy, Tuskegee University. Dr. Clark provided a presentation on Allied Health Sciences and the entry process and outlook for OT programs. Both of the health professionals, as well as, Dr. Cheryl Davis, provided an overview of a nurse practitioner to ensure that the student that chose Nursing as a career path their questions and concerns addressed and ensured that they were knowledgeable of the process, outlook and career tracks.

*Day 7: "Go placidly amid the noise in haste"*

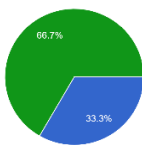
The final day of the program was devoted to participant presentations and evaluations. Each participant successfully completed the final project and covered addressed each of the questions.

IMPACT/RESULTS:

Students were engaged throughout the entirety of the program and actively engaged with various career tracks in health care careers and health sciences. Their knowledge of various careers is evidenced by 100 percent of students were able to name 20 health care careers on the pretest and 100 percent on the posttest with different careers on the post-test than provided on the pretest. One hundred percent of participants were able to distinguish the various levels of health care at the end of the program. By the end of the project 100 percent of students understood that health care careers can be obtained with various levels of education ranging from a high school diploma to an advanced degree. This was an increase from only thirty percent on the pre-test. One hundred percent of participants were able to identify 3 benefits of a health care career. One hundred percent of participants were able to differentiate between the roles of each of the health care pathways. Students were able to define health and wellness with greater proficiency upon completion of the program. Students were able to successfully distinguish between different types of wellness upon completion of the program. Participants had an increase in knowledge of Health Care Teams.

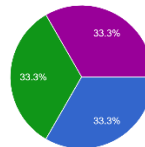
PRE-TEST

Medical doctors, obstetricians/gynecologists, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners are considered what type of health service provider?  
3 responses



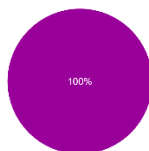
- Advanced Practice Providers
- Diagnostic Providers
- Specialist Providers
- Primary Care Providers

Which statement is false?  
3 responses



- I can become a healthcare worker with a high school diploma.
- I can become a healthcare worker with a certificate in a couple of weeks.
- I can become a healthcare worker after a 2 year degree.
- It will take me 4-6 years to become a healthcare worker.
- There are no false statements.

Which statement is false?  
2 responses



- I can become a healthcare worker with a high school diploma.
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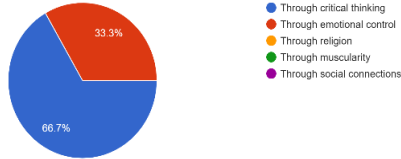


- Advanced Practice Providers
- Diagnostic Providers
- Specialist Providers
- Primary Care Providers

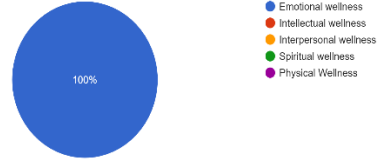
PRE-TEST

POST TEST

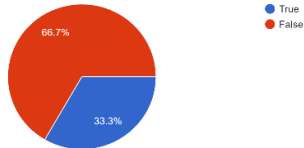
How might someone demonstrate intellectual wellness intellectual wellness  
3 responses



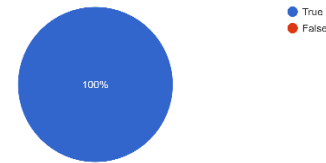
A person who is confident and exhibits a good sense of self-esteem, are characteristics of someone with \_\_\_\_.  
2 responses



T/F: Health Care Teams are only made up of doctors and nurses?  
3 responses



T/F: Health Care Teams are made up of a group of people made up of mostly doctors and nurses.  
2 responses



Based on the results of the exit survey one hundred percent of participants with agreed or strongly agreed that the Health College Connection Program was successful in introducing them to new health care careers and that they learned the skills that they need to be successful in a healthcare career.

The Health College Connection Program introduced me to new healthcare careers  
2 responses



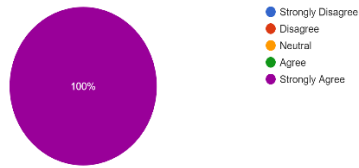
I understand the skills that I need to be successful in a healthcare career.  
2 responses



One hundred percent of participants Strongly Agreed that HCCP helped them to develop their goals in the healthcare profession, they had an understanding of what college courses and personal characteristics they need in order to obtain that career.



The Health College Connection Program helped me to develop my goals in the healthcare profession.  
2 responses



I have a better understanding of what college course I need in order to have a career in healthcare.  
2 responses



I understand the personal characteristics that I must have in order to secure a career in healthcare.  
2 responses



The consensus amongst the participants was recruitment efforts should be broadened and there should be more time should apply. If participants could see something different with HCCP it would be to provide more speakers and a longer duration. Participants enjoyed the topics, format and timing and would keep them the same. The participants felt as though more programs aimed at direct health education, health and wellness promotion and agriculture would be useful for the for their community of peers. When asked specifically how HCCP helped the participants they noted, "It helped me to outline my specific career goals," "I have a better understanding of what I want to do in the future." When asked what each participant learned from HCCP, "I learned what each career entails, how they are grouped together in order to better understand what I want to do, and how to get into my specific career." "I learned that there is a such thing called a speech pathologist." One hundred percent of participants stated that they would recommend HCCP to their friends. When asked to describe their thoughts about HCCP participants responded, "I thought it was educational and it pushed us to explore what we want to do and why, GREAT OPPORTUNITY!" "It was a great experience!"

If I could fix something, I would modify assessment questions to more open-ended question to better assess the knowledge change. I would like to engage the schools and do the program multiple times per year versus one. I would consider doing a longer program maybe two weeks versus one. I would expand the scope of the program and add a health and wellness component to better convey the message of how the health care teams and the body interact. I would also expand the age range to provide younger youth an opportunity to start thinking about healthcare careers earlier in the event that there are course requirements that they may need.