



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

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BRIDGING DISCIPLINES, BUILDING COMMUNITIES: INTERPROFESSIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING AS A PATHWAY TO HEALTH EQUITY

ABSTRACT:

This panel explores how inter-professional education (IPE) and service-learning unite students across health disciplines to address social determinants of health and promote community wellness. Panelists from medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, and allied health will share how collaborative, community-based projects foster teamwork, empathy, and culturally responsive care while directly impacting underserved populations.

Panelists will discuss the development and implementation of this and similar initiatives, highlight lessons learned, and share strategies for replicating sustainable, cross-disciplinary service-learning models. Attendees will gain insight into how IPE experiences can transform student learning, strengthen community trust, and create equitable pathways to health for all.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Blockage and Clearance: Physical, infrastructural, financial, or organizational barriers or portals to community engagement.

Convergence and Intersections: How increasing or decreasing hyperconnectivity can impact community engagement.

BIO(S):

Jamel Lee is a Community Engagement Specialist in the Office of Student Engagement at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. He leads the development and implementation of co-curricular programming that prepares future health professionals to address health disparities and the social determinants of health through cross-disciplinary collaboration and community engagement. With a background in business administration, workforce education, and community-based program development, Jamel brings a strategic and equity-centered lens to student engagement initiatives. His work focuses on bridging educational pathways, strengthening community partnerships, and creating transformative learning experiences that empower students to serve underserved populations.

Dr. Nikki Dyer is a dedicated educator, clinician, and advocate with over 27 years of experience in the field of mental health and well-being. She is a professor at UTHSC College of Dentistry, where she teaches students in courses such as Dental Ethics, Human Behavior and Person-Centered Dentistry. She has a passion for fostering discussions on gender, sexuality, identity, and social justice, and integrates these topics into her teaching and research. She is also involved in interprofessional education and healthcare simulation, designing and facilitating immersive learning experiences to enhance clinical communication and ethical decision-making among future healthcare professionals.

Jess McDill is the Associate Director of Student Leadership and Activities in the Office of Leadership and Service at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, and a doctoral candidate in Adult Learning and Higher Education at the University of Memphis. She leads a co-curricular certificate program focused on the social determinants of health and designs experiential learning initiatives that connect students with community partners. She is a TeamSTEPPS Master Trainer and works closely with community engaged IPE events and activities. Her scholarship explores student food insecurity, leadership development in health sciences, and the role of adult education in advancing health equity. She holds an MFA in Costume Design and a Master of Education Leadership and spends most of her free time with her kids and her Scouts.

Teresa O'Daniel, BSDH, MS, is a Registered Dental Hygienist and Assistant Professor of Dental Hygiene at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, where she enjoys being the Course Director for the Community Dental Health Theory and Community Dental Health Practicum courses. She holds a Master's Degree in Strategic and Digital Communication and multiple certifications. She loves spending her spare time with her husband and family, including her Irish Wolfhound, Mulligan.

As one of two advisors for IAOSH, Waletha Wasson, BS, MPA, MS, MAGD, DDS, emphasizes oral-systemic and medical-dental integrative care, as well as interprofessional education and collaborative clinical patient/care. She is the founder and member of Tennessee Smiles: U.T. Grassroots Oral Health Outreach Initiative (2003). She was a 2023 fellow at the Delta Regional Authority – Delta Leadership Institute Executive Academy from January to September 2023. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Academy of General Dentistry Foundation, the Community Advisory Council for the Assisi Foundation of Memphis, Inc., and the American Academy for Oral Systemic Health Advisory Council. She is the Program Director of A 21st Century Initiative – Oral-Systemic and Population-Based Health for All (2018).

Houston, TX | March 26-28, 2026