

MCH-STEP DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT – AN EVALUATION

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Abstract

Background: Maternal and child health (MCH) focuses on health issues affecting women, children, and families, and includes the care that both a mother and her child(ren) receive before, during, and after pregnancy. The Maternal and Child Health Scholars, Training, and Enrichment Program (MCH-STEP) is an MCH Bureau grant-funded training program. It encourages diverse cohorts of undergraduate students (e.g., BIPOC, low socioeconomic status, rural, first-generation college students) from three units in the College of Health and Human Performance (HEP, SSW, HDFS) to explore the MCH field. This program educates and trains diverse scholars who seek to serve historically marginalized women, children, and families by increasing their access to satisfactory and quality care. Through MCH-STEP, we are raising awareness about the importance of MCH to East Carolina University students, the university, and the larger community. The aim of this thesis paper is to evaluate the effectiveness of the monthly seminar components of MCH-STEP employing a mixed-methods approach of close-ended and open-ended survey items.

Methods: Monthly seminars are evaluated by collecting survey responses from attendees. Each cohort attends an average of eight monthly seminars per year and is highly encouraged to submit survey responses evaluating their experiences. The survey includes five close-ended and five open-ended questions, and collects feedback regarding things scholars learned, liked, disliked, and any suggestions they may have for future seminars. The close-ended questions are analyzed to produce mean percentages of how many scholars highly rated the seminar based on the five survey questions. The open-ended questions are analyzed by question using a thematic analysis approach.

Results: Using close-ended data, we found that the mean percentage of scholars that reported being extremely or very satisfied with monthly seminar speakers was 90%. About 82% of scholars said that the length of discussion for each seminar was ‘about right’. In the open-ended questions, many scholars mentioned their appreciation for how MCH-STEP opened their eyes to MCH career possibilities beyond the medical field, as well as shared suggestions for improving MCH-STEP.

Conclusion: We will use this program evaluation data as an improvement strategy for MCH-STEP and have already incorporated feedback into subsequent activities.

Background

Maternal and child health (MCH) focuses on the health issues affecting women, children, and families, and includes the care that both a mother and her child(ren) receive before, during, and after pregnancy. The Maternal and Child Health Scholars, Training, and Enrichment Program (MCH-STEP) is funded by the MCH Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Each academic year, MCH-STEP recruits and selects applicants to participate in the two-year-long MCH-STEP program. There are currently two cohorts of MCH-STEP scholars, Cohort 1 (2021-2023) and Cohort 2 (2022-2024). Each scholar is expected to complete coursework related to the field, participate in a four-week online professional development academy during the summer, attend monthly seminars, and participate in an internship/practicum within the MCH field with a professional or a faculty member.

MCH-STEP encourages diverse cohorts of undergraduate students (e.g., Black, Indigenous, and People of Color [BIPOC], low socioeconomic status, rural, first-generation

college students) from three units in the College of Health and Human Performance (Health Education and Promotion, School of Social Work, Human Development and Family Science) to explore the MCH field. The program focuses on educating and training scholars who seek to serve historically marginalized women, children, and families by increasing their access to satisfactory and quality care. Through MCH-STEP, we are raising awareness about the importance of maternal and child health to East Carolina University (ECU) students, the university, and the larger community. This honors thesis project aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the monthly seminar components of MCH-STEP by employing a mixed-methods approach of close-ended and open-ended survey items. Using this evaluation data will help to improve and build a strong MCH-STEP program.

Study Methods

To collect meaningful data for the development and improvement of MCH-STEP, a mixed-methods approach of closed- and open-ended survey questions were used. After each monthly seminar, scholars were required to fill out a survey (Table 1) distributed through Qualtrics – a platform for creating virtual surveys and polls – regarding their likes and dislikes about the seminar they attended. The likes and dislikes of scholars were evaluated through close-ended questions, which asked scholars to rate their satisfaction with five different components of the seminar on a scale from 1 to 5 (e.g., excellent to poor). Scholars were also offered five open-ended questions which provided them with a way to give more detailed feedback about the seminar and suggestions for future seminars.

After the Qualtrics survey was closed and all scholars who attended the seminar had submitted their survey responses, the data were accessible for download through an online

Qualtrics platform account. Data were organized into Excel spreadsheets which were set up to calculate the average responses to each of the five close-ended survey questions. Averages were then transferred into organized tables for a simplified summary of the data collected for easy evaluation. All five open-ended question responses were then recorded separately, on a Word document, and evaluated using a thematic analysis approach.

Results

Close-Ended Data

The data from close-ended survey responses were used to create three separate tables titled *Table 2. Cohort 1 Scholar Responses (August 2021-March 2022)*, *Table 3. Cohort 1 Scholar Responses (October 2022-March 2023)*, and *Table 4. Cohort 2 Scholar Responses (September 2022-April 2023)*. In summary, the close-ended data provided a general overview of scholar satisfaction with each of the monthly seminars. From the data recorded in Table 2, the mean percentage of Cohort 1 scholars who reported being *extremely* or *very satisfied* with monthly seminars overall in the 2021-2022 school year was 90%, which was calculated by taking the average percentage of each month. In Cohort 1, 82% of the scholars said that the length of discussion for each seminar in the 2021-2022 school year was *'about right'*. This means that 18% of scholars thought the time allotted for discussion was either *too long* or *too short*. In the 2022-2023 school year (Table 3), an average of 89% of Cohort 1 scholars reported that the monthly seminars were *extremely* or *very organized*. For that same year, 54% of Cohort 1 scholars reported that the length of each seminar discussion was *'about right'*. In the 2022-2023 school year (Table 4), about 97% of Cohort 2 scholars rated the overall monthly seminars

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to be *excellent* or *very good*. In the same year, 97% of Cohort 2 scholars reported being either *extremely* or *very satisfied* with the speakers at each of the monthly seminars.

From August 2021 - March 2023, an average of 75% of Cohort 1 scholars reported their monthly seminar experience as *excellent* or *very good*. This average could be calculated using the average responses from each monthly seminar in Table 2 and Table 3. The high percentage (97%) of Cohort 2 scholars who rated the monthly seminars in 2022-2023 as *excellent* or *very good* indicates a positive trend and an increase in scholar satisfaction with the overall MCH-STEP experience.

For more specific details, the survey questions and summarized data of survey responses are included in tables for reference below.

Table 1. Close-Ended Survey Questions	
SURVEY ITEM	RESPONSE OPTIONS
Overall, how would you rate the monthly seminar?	1 – Excellent 2 – Very Good 3 – Good 4 – Fair 5 – Poor
How organized was the monthly seminar?	1 – Extremely organized 2 – Very organized 3 – Somewhat organized 4 – Not so organized 5 – Not at all organized
Was the seminar length too long, too short, or about right?	1 – Much too long 2 – Too long 3 – About right 4 – Too short 5 – Much too short

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Was the time for discussion too long, too short, or about right?	1 – Much too long 2 – Too long 3 – About right 4 – Too short 5 – Much too short
How satisfied were you with the speakers at the monthly seminars?	1 – Extremely satisfied 2 – Very satisfied 3 – Somewhat satisfied 4 – Not so satisfied 5 – Not at all satisfied

Table 2. Cohort 1 Scholar Responses (Aug 2021-Mar 2022)

Questions	Measure	Sep 2022 Ropes Course (N=5)	Oct 2022 Faculty Mentor Panel 1 (N=7)	Nov 2022 Faculty Mentor Panel 2 (N=7)	Jan 2023 Elevator Pitch (N=6)
Overall, how would you rate the monthly seminar?	% Excellent or Very Good	100%	86%	100%	100%
How organized was the monthly seminar?	% Extremely or Very Organized	100%	100%	100%	100%
Was the seminar length too long, too short, or <u>about</u> right?	% About Right	60%	100%	100%	100%
Was the time for discussion too long, too short, or <u>about</u> right?	% About Right	100%	86%	100%	100%
How satisfied were you with the speakers at the monthly seminar?	% Extremely or Very Satisfied	100%	100%	100%	100%

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Table 3. Cohort 1 Scholar Responses (Oct 2022-Mar 2023)

Questions	Measure	Oct 2022 Internships (N=10)	Nov 2022 Graduate School Apps (N=6)	Feb 2023 Film Festival (N=6)	March 2023 Visit to UNC-CH (N=7)
Overall, how would you rate the monthly seminar?	% Excellent or Very Good	80%	33%	33%	71%
How organized was the monthly seminar?	% Extremely or Very Organized	90%	83%	83%	100%
Was the seminar length too long, too short, or <u>about</u> right?	% About Right	80%	50%	67%	71%
Was the time for discussion too long, too short, or <u>about</u> right?	% About Right	90%	33%	50%	43%
How satisfied were you with the speakers at the monthly seminar?	% Extremely or Very Satisfied	100%	17%	83%	71%

Table 4. Cohort 2 Scholar Responses (Sep 2022-Apr 2023)

Questions	Measure	Sep 2022 Ropes Course (N=5)	Oct 2022 Faculty Mentor Panel 1 (N=7)	Nov 2022 Faculty Mentor Panel 2 (N=7)	Jan 2023 Elevator Pitch (N=6)	Apr 2023 Year-End Celebration (N=7)
Overall, how would you rate the monthly seminar?	% Excellent or Very Good	100%	86%	100%	100%	100%
How organized was the monthly seminar?	% Extremely or Very Organized	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Was the seminar length too long, too short, or <u>about</u> right?	% About Right	60%	100%	100%	100%	43%
Was the time for discussion too long, too short, or <u>about</u> right?	% About Right	100%	86%	100%	100%	43%
How satisfied were you with the speakers at the monthly seminar?	% Extremely or Very Satisfied	100%	100%	100%	100%	86%

Open-Ended Data

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Since open-ended data were evaluated using a thematic analysis approach, graphs and/or tables were not necessary. Instead, each monthly seminar survey's open-ended responses were recorded on a Word document and organized by which monthly seminar the responses were recorded. After reviewing each of the responses from individual seminars, feedback that was repeated by multiple scholars or plausible suggestions for seminars from the scholars were highlighted for future reference in the development and planning of MCH-STEP. In other words, the open-ended responses were evaluated for trends and themes in feedback from the scholars to establish strengths and areas for improvement in the seminars. For example, a common theme was the expression from many scholars who mentioned their appreciation for the way that MCH-STEP opened their eyes to MCH career possibilities beyond the medical field. Scholars from Cohort 1 and 2 shared this sentiment. They stated the following:

"I enjoyed being exposed to internship opportunities, networking opportunities and learning about future internships and jobs that can boost up my resume." –

Cohort 2 Scholar, 2023

"I enjoyed being able to meet faculty mentors and community advisory board members in person. This was a really great networking opportunity for us

scholars!" – Cohort 1 Scholar, 2023

Scholars often requested that monthly seminars include more information regarding internship opportunities, employment opportunities, and other ways that they can get involved with and explore the MCH field as undergraduate students. Scholars also shared other meaningful ways they wanted to engage in the program. A Cohort 1 scholar shared:

"I wish there were more opportunities for us to get to know the professors better, instead of just monthly meetings. Maybe they can be optional." – Cohort 1

Scholar, 2021

A summary of key topics that arose in the open-ended responses have been recorded for reference in Table 5.

Table 5. Open-Ended Survey Questions	
Survey Items	Free Responses (examples selected from survey data at random)
What did you enjoy most about the monthly seminar?	Meeting new people, advice from panelists, games/activities, making connections with faculty and professionals, practicing professionalism
What, if anything, did you dislike about the monthly seminar?	Not enough one-on-one time with mentors, sometimes guest speakers were off topic
How can we improve the next monthly seminar?	Make a GroupMe for each cohort to communicate about seminars, allow more student/scholar discussions, continue providing snacks and refreshments
What topics would you like us to cover at future monthly seminar sessions?	More information on graduate programs and MCH-related careers, how to get exposure and experience in the MCH field as an undergraduate student, internship opportunities, reproductive rights, child life
What other suggestions or feedback would you like to share?	Give speakers a time limit, more healthy snack options, lots of “keep up the good work” and “great seminar”

Discussion

As expressed in the tables and thematic-analysis approach of data evaluation above, the satisfaction of scholars has steadily increased throughout the duration of their participation in MCH-STEP. The program’s evaluation data and summary tables will continue to be used as a

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quality improvement strategy for MCH-STEP by incorporating feedback from the scholars into subsequent activities and utilizing it to optimize the MCH-STEP experience. By evaluating the data collected and incorporating scholar feedback into the planning and development of MCH-STEP, the leadership team aims to establish cohorts of diverse and well-educated scholars who will make a strong impact in their future MCH-related careers and a positive impact on the healthcare of historically marginalized women, children, and families.