Utilizing Pre-Professional Students to Address Drug and Alcohol Addiction in Missoula

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UTILIZING PRE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS TO ADDRESS DRUG AND ALCOHOL ADDICTION IN MISSOULA

Maren Carlson and Morgan Weidow
QUEST 2019-2020
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MEET THE TEAM

MAREN CARLSON

Senior
Human Biological Sciences

Maren is from Bismarck, ND and came to school in MT because of a love for the mountains. She has always been drawn to healthcare and plans to apply to dental and PA schools following graduation.

MORGAN WEIDOW

Junior
Human Biological Sciences, Business Administration

Morgan grew up in Hamilton, MT and graduated from Corvallis High School. She is a UM Campus Advocate, a Resident Assistant, and is conducting research on developing medical devices from silk. Morgan plans to pursue medical school after graduation.
The United States has seen a steady increase in drug and alcohol addictions and usage over the past century despite a nearly 50 year “war on drugs”\(^1\). The city of Missoula has been facing many of the same issues as the rest of the country. It has been shown many times that more strictly policing illegal drugs does not significantly improve the issue\(^1\). Our goal for this project is to provide resources for individuals struggling with illegal drug usage which can help them in overcoming their addictions.

**What is the appropriate role of local government in the prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol addiction?**

We believe the local government should invest in student involvement in addressing the issue of drug and alcohol addiction by creating an internship program and online portal for students to access information about available volunteer opportunities and internships. Additionally, we propose a renewable scholarship fund to financially support students who complete unpaid internships or volunteer hours. We believe utilizing students will help existing community resources to reach more individuals working to overcome addiction.
1 in 10 Montanans struggle with a substance abuse disorder.

>72,000 Montanans needed treatment for substance between 2015-2016 but did not get it.

18-25 Year Olds In Montana rank among the highest nationwide for alcohol abuse.
## Annual Cost of Addiction in Montana

<table>
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<th>Cost</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>$642,000,000</td>
<td>Spent annually in Montana on alcohol, tobacco, and drug use/abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100.7 million</td>
<td>Alcohol induced medical care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$49.1 million</td>
<td>Criminal justice and jail courts relating to substance abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$19.8 million</td>
<td>Law enforcement surrounding drug and alcohol abuse</td>
</tr>
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</table>
WHAT IF THE “WAR ON DRUGS” MEANT GETTING PEOPLE THE HELP THEY NEED?
OUR PRIORITIES

Utilize complex care and “people first” methods to address the needs of those most “at-risk” in our community.

Focus on individuals who are deemed “frequent users” to minimize cost to the city.

Tap into, and give a voice to, an under-utilized, valuable and affordable resource: students.
RECOMMENDATION

UTILIZE STUDENTS TO EXPAND EXISTING RESOURCES

We recommend the city of Missoula create an internship program and portal on the city website where students can access information about available volunteer and internship opportunities in the community. Ideally, this will be a cohort of Undergraduate Students Addressing Addiction and Treatment (USAAT) interns working alongside our dedicated groups and organizations currently tackling these issues. Additionally, we propose the city have a renewable scholarship fund for students who complete unpaid internships or complete a certain number of volunteer hours in a semester.
CASE STUDIES & MODELS

Successful models in practice of student involvement benefiting communities.

- Camden Coalition, New Jersey
- Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS), Oregon
- Student Advocacy Resource Center (SARC), University of Montana
The Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers' mission is to “spark a field and movement that unites communities of caregivers in Camden and across the nation to improve the wellbeing of individuals with complex health and social needs...” They take a person-centered approach to helping individuals with chronic illness and complex social barriers to healthcare and increasing primary care visits versus emergency visits.

They run a project called “Hotspotting” where pre-health student teams work with “super-utilizers” to address needs before they need costly medical intervention. The goal is coordinated, team-based and data-driven care to help the whole person and address non-medical care: housing, mental health, substance abuse, and emotional support.

The University of Montana currently runs a Student Hotspotting program here on campus through the Camden Coalition. Pre-professional and undergraduate students work to assist super-utilizers identified by Partnership Health’s Frequent User System Engagement (FUSE). UM’s capacity is six patients and six student teams. These students travel to the University of Utah once a semester for training.
CAHOOTS, Portland

Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets (CAHOOTS) is an initiative of White Bird Clinic in Eugene, Oregon. White Bird Clinic was founded in 1969 by student advocates and practitioners.⁷ CAHOOTS is a mobile crisis intervention program where teams of a medic and counselor handle mental health or substance abuse crisis calls.⁸ Currently, the CAHOOTS program handles 17% of non-emergency calls in Eugene. This model is now serving in multiple Oregon cities and Denver, New York City, and Indianapolis.⁹
SARC is a non-profit partnership between the YWCA of Missoula and the University of Montana. The partnership aims to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and violence on campus, and to be a resource for individuals who have found themselves victims of any of those offenses. The organization is run by professional employees and supplemented with student volunteers, interns, and practicum students.¹⁰

Students are willing to get involved and they can make a difference.

When you feel lost or confused about life, SARC knows how to bring back your light.

— SARC CLIENT
IMPLEMENTATION

1. COMPILE POSITIONS

2. BUILD ONLINE PORTAL

3. SET UP FUND
STEP 1: COMPILE POSITIONS

Reach out to local organizations working to address addiction in the community and get information about what volunteer and internships positions they currently have available or would be willing to create.

Check in with organizations about any unmet needs they may discuss if there is potential to fill some of those needs with an unpaid intern.
STEP 2: BUILD ONLINE PORTAL

Build an online portal which contains information about the organizations, available positions, applications, and any necessary forms or links.

Advertise the portal around campus. Encourage professors and advisors to direct students to the portal. Students will apply to be a USAAT intern and select the placement of their choice.
STEP 3: SET UP SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Write grants which could fund the scholarships. Also reach out to private donors to supplement the fund.

Outline minimum requirements to qualify for scholarship. Create an application and begin recruiting for USAAT intern cohort.
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Treatment, Recovery, and Workforce Support Grant

Anticipated award amount: $500,000 for up to 5 years. Our hope is access this grant to fund the scholarship program.

Available for “Entities that provide treatment or recovery services for individuals with substance use disorders and partner with one or more local or state stakeholders, which may include local employers, community organizations, the local workforce development board, local and state governments, and Indian tribes or tribal organizations, to support recovery, independent living, and participation in the workforce.”11
In a survey our team drafted and distributed, we asked University of Montana students about their willingness to volunteer in the Missoula Community.

Due to the COVID-19 response efforts, we were unable to distribute the survey as widely as we had planned. However, we still were able to collect 24 responses. We would re-run this survey in the near future to garner more data. Though small, our sample did show that students are interested in volunteering with organizations that address drug addiction and treatment in Missoula.

**Initial findings:**

- 78% of surveyed students require an internship and/or capstone for graduation.
- 65.2% already have shown interest by previously volunteering.
- All respondents said they would be willing to commit 2-10 hours per week in a volunteer or internship role.
INITIAL GOALS

Start Spring 2021 semester with 5-10 interns with, but not limited to, the following groups:

- Poverello Center
- Open Aid Alliance
- Partnership Health Center
- Reaching Home program
- Western Montana Addiction Services
- At-Risk Housing Coalition
- Crisis Intervention Team
STUDENT GOALS

Our hope is that students could spend 1-2 years in this position working on a topic or project that they are passionate about. This could be research, public service, outreach, communication, etc. designed to be applicable to students within any major program.

Core competencies:

By the end of the internship period, students should be able to:

- Understand the status quo of addiction in Missoula
- Be familiar with programs and services in Missoula that are working to address the issue
- Summarize and speak on behalf of the mission of their respective organization
- Set goals towards a project plan and make measurable progress towards reaching those goals
EVALUATION - 2 Steps

1. Evaluation form completed by student interns and direct supervisors:
   (evaluation is the scholarship application)

   - “Do you feel that this internship was a valuable use of your time?”
   - “How did you contribute to the prevention or treatment of drug and alcohol abuse?”
   - “Would you participate in this program/welcome another intern again?”
   - “What were your goals with this position and how did you fulfill them?”

   Paperwork and applications will be processed through UM Experiential Learning office.
2. Bi-annual report to analyze the cost/savings to the City of Missoula

- Are the interns saving organizations money that they would otherwise spend on hiring?
- Do these organizations have a desire to keep buying into the program?
- Is there a broader impact? Are we addressing the issue?

Quantitative data specific to each internship, (i.e., decrease in use of emergency resources or organizational goals met). This will be collected by program coordinator (appointed student position) in collaboration with each of the organizations or groups that hosts an intern.
FUTURE INITIATIVES

1. MOBILE CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM

Following the CAHOOTS model, we believe there is a need for mobile crisis intervention in Missoula. This is a resource that could be utilized by the general and student population, specifically in student-of-concern cases in residence halls.

2. ESTABLISH HOTSPOTTING HUB IN MISSOULA

The UM Student Hotspotting program currently travels to Salt Lake City, UT for their bi-annual training. We would like to see the university and the City of Missoula collaborate to create a training hub for this program here in Missoula to expand the reach of the hotspotting program in Missoula.

3. HOSPITAL-TO-HOUSING PROGRAM

Establish a position that works closely with case managers at St. Patrick Hospital and Community Medical Center to find housing for homeless individuals upon inpatient discharge. This program would focus on those identified as “super-utilizers” by the Frequent User System Engagement program through Partnership Health.

4. INTERVENTIONAL HOUSING

Missoula has a need for additional, low-income housing. Intervventional housing can get individuals off of the street and connected to necessary resources and recovery assistance. Individuals with stable housing are better able to seek preventative care instead of costly emergency care.
Theresa Williams, LCSW
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City of Missoula

Shannon Miller
Immunologist
University of Montana

Tara Ivanovitch
Addiction and Mental Health Counselor
University of Montana
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Davidson Honors College

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Davidson Honors College

Lia Volpa
QUEST Student Co-lead
Davidson Honors College
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