**Health Policy Curriculum: Syllabus**

Executive summary:

SUNY Downstate is the lone healthcare-related academic institution in Brooklyn. Though policy trends, from immigration to urban investment and development, directly affect our patient community, there are few structured training opportunities for Downstate students to pursue in health policy within their respective clinical and non-clinical schedules. The Downstate Health Sciences University (DHSU) Health Policy Curriculum will provide an opportunity for learners to obtain a general understanding of health policy through a combination of recorded and in-person learning sessions. Pre-recorded lectures focused on a range of basic knowledge components allow faculty to build a fund of knowledge for their students from which active learning sessions can flourish. The in-person virtual learning sessions allows learners to develop and reinforce academic and advocacy skills in health policy (HP).

Curricular Narrative

To tie the disparate asynchronous lecture topics to the students learning experience here in Central Brooklyn, we have developed three narratives that are presented in an iterative fashion throughout the lectures.

1. Utilization of the CDC Policy Development Framework to develop a policy intervention.
2. Highlighting local health trends within each lecture’s content.
3. Providing examples of additional advocacy/educational opportunities for learners

Curricular Goals & Objectives

Goal #1: Develop knowledge base in HP-related competencies

* Understand basic concepts in HP
* Develop a diverse HP-related fund of knowledge
* Engender dedication to equity in medicine and public health

Goal #2: Develop interactive/experiential programming to allow implementation of HP-related competencies

* Discuss how to transform an identified problem into a successful policy resolution
* Complete at least one writing project within the academic year the elective is taken
* Understand common forms of writing and media used in HP
* Understand how to coordinate meetings with your elected and public officials
* Actively participate in a public forum, such as a Mock Congress of Delegates, Legislative visit or other related policy session.

Curriculum Breakdown:

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| Asynchronous Sessions:   * 2 per week, 60-90 minutes * Recorded lectures + readings * Passive learning * Focus on fund of knowledge and topical content   Lecture list:   1. Health Policy Basics 2. American Health Care System 3. LGBTQ+ Policy 4. Reproductive Health Policy 5. Legal Issues in Health Care 6. Health Care Finance 7. Firearm Violence Prevention 8. Race and Ethnicity in Health Policy 9. Immigration Policy 10. Resolution Writing 101 11. Federalism in Health Policy 12. COVID Health Policy | Synchronous Sessions:   * 3-4 per week * In-person sessions * Active/practical learning environment * Focus on competency and skill development   Assignments:   * Writing workshop: Produce an academic piece that falls into one of the following categories: Article review, Public communication, Policy brief * Resolution workshop: Develop a resolution proposal that includes where-as clauses, resolved clauses and a plan for adoption/implementation |

Learner Expectations:

* Complete all recorded lectures, associated readings, and anonymous surveys
* Actively participate and contribute to all synchronous sessions
* Health Policy Writing assignment:
  + Open lines/outline: End of Week 1
  + First draft
  + Final draft: Tuesday of Week 4
* Resolution Writing assignment
  + First draft: End of Week 1
  + Final draft: Tuesday of Week 4

**Week 1: Introduction**

A foundational understanding of definitions, general historical patterns and professional trends are important for any learner who plans on creating a policy and advocacy skillset. In this chapter learners will review basic concepts in health policy and the history of health care reform in the United States. During this time period, learners should also be identifying their personal interest in health policy and thinking about how they will integrate these topics/skills into their future careers, two factors which will guide their elective project.

Asynchronous sessions:

1. **Introduction: Health Policy Basics**

Description: Reviews common terms, examples of successful physicians in health policy, and provides a framework for future development of policy initiatives.  Highlights intersectionality of competencies in health policy and academia and provides examples of professional careers in health policy and academia

1. Goal: To introduce residents to basic knowledge/competencies in health policy and potential professional opportunities in health policy
   1. Objective 1: Understand the relevance of health policy in medicine
   2. Objective 2: Name examples of physician professionals in health policy
   3. Objective 3: Describe the types of insurance and insurers in U.S. healthcare
   4. Objective 4: List educational and/or career options in health policy
   5. Objective 5: List competencies that overlap between health policy and academic medicine
   6. Objective 6: Describe the CDC framework for policy intervention
2. **The American Healthcare System**

Description: Survey of the historical trajectory of the American health care ‘system’ and attempts at reform, culminating in the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

1. Goal: To discover the historical patterns underlying attempts to reform the American health care system
   1. Objective 1: Identify factors creating conditions for high-quality care to be unequally distributed
   2. Objective 2: Identify the factors increasing the cost of healthcare
   3. Objective 3: Name at least 3 public and private payers of healthcare
   4. Objective 4: Discuss how the healthcare payment system developed over time
   5. Objective 5: Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to lower healthcare costs while expanding coverage (i.e. ACA)
   6. Objective 6: Explain how disparate forces form the American healthcare system

Synchronous sessions:

1. **Introductory meeting**

Description: Virtual or in-person meeting meant to review schedules, software used during educational methods, and general expectations for learners and teachers. During this time period the main narratives of the curriculum will be highlighted (i.e. intersection with academia, CDC policy development framework and health trends in Central Brooklyn) as well as the deadlines for the writing workshop and mock congress of delegates.

* Location: Blackboard
* Length: Approximately 60 min

1. **Health Policy Writing Workshop**

Description: Ongoing political drama continues to prove that a successful political advocate is defined by their ability to communicate, not necessarily their effectiveness in implementing a policy vision. An ability to share your ideas, communicate your successes, and contribute to academic discourse is an important tool for both the frontline provider and academic advocate. This chapter will review several forms of communication useful in health policy. By its completion learners will be able to utilize several literary venues to advance their policy goals.

1. Goal: To develop communication strategies relevant to health advocacy
   1. Objective 1: List at least two principles of communication
   2. Objective 2: Describe the difference between a policy brief, article review, and policy review
   3. Objective 3: Develop an outline for at least 1 policy writing format
2. **Open Discussion: COVID-19 and the U.S. Health Care System**

Description: How has COVID-19 effected our health care system, and how have we responded as a society? Using current media topics this session will review the systemic COVID-19 response, success and failures, and the path forward. The open discussion format encourages free-flowing conversation that facilitates an enriching conversation.

1. Goal: To engage in evidence-based critical analysis of the systemic response to COVID-19
   1. Objective 1: Identify common policy responses to COVID-19
   2. Objective 2: Assess the effectiveness of New York City’s response to COVID-19
   3. Objective 3: Discuss the steps required to (safely) emerge from the crisis surrounding COVID-19
   4. Objective 4: Critically analyze popular media publications
   5. Objective 5: Participate in evidence-based discussions using common topics in popular media
2. Discussion prompts:
   1. How have different regions responded to the COVID-19 crisis? Different agencies or parts of government?
   2. What is the best way to disengage from a public health emergency such as the COVID-19 crisis?
3. **Review Discussion:**

Description: Open discussion reviewing the asynchronous sessions of the past week and tying them into the common curricular narratives, including but not limited to: CDC policy development framework, Health care trends in central Brooklyn, Advocacy opportunities for students and residents in health care.

**Week 2**

Asynchronous sessions:

1. **Health Care Finance: An Overview**

Description: Describe the chief means through which health care is remunerated, when, and by whom.

1. Goal: Examine the financial infrastructure of U.S. health care
   1. Objective 1: Identify the major payers of health care in the U.S.
   2. Objective 2: Illustrate the relationships between private and public payers of health care
   3. Objective 3: Describe the role of managed care within healthcare systems
   4. Objective 4: Assess proposals for reform of public and private payers
2. Additional Media: None
3. **Resolution Writing Pre-Workshop Didactic**

Description: Resolution writing is one tool that physicians can use to affect the scope and direction of organizational agendas. By the end of the class the learner will understand how to identify a problem that is amenable to a policy intervention, how to translate that into a resolution format, and how to prepare to implement the resolution language. Using the CDC Policy Development Framework, learners will be able to use these skills to guide organizational and institutional resources towards efficient, moral and socially just ends.

1. Goal: Develop an understanding of the resolution process and its application to physician advocacy
   1. Objective 1: Identify a problem amenable to a policy resolution
   2. Objective 2: Complete the literature review necessary to write a policy resolution
   3. Objective 3: Develop a testimony pertaining to a specific resolution
   4. Objective 4: Develop a strategy for resolution policy implementation

Synchronous sessions:

1. **Resolution Writing Workshop**

Description: The resolution process and associated legislative sessions are important markers of a grassroots, constituent driven organization. Resolutions allow organizational members to contribute to the organizational agenda and resource allocation. By completing this session, you will learn not only the components of a resolution, but how to transition from an identified problem to a legislative proposal, as well as about testimony writing and critical debate.

1. Goal: Understand how to produce and critically analyze a resolution proposal
   1. Objective 1: Discuss the role of communication in academic and health policy
   2. Objective 2: Understand how to identify and describe your target audience
   3. Objective 3: Understand how to write a policy editorial
   4. Objective 4: Understand how to write a policy review
2. Additional media: None
3. **Open Discussion: Funding Medicaid**

Description: Open discussion reviewing the funding mechanisms for Medicaid, how they compare to Medicare, and the implications for our local, regional, and national health care system. Learners will leave this evidence-based critical discussion with a better understanding of the inner workings of their health care system.

1. Goal: To engage in evidence-based critical analysis of the systemic response to COVID-19 pandemic
   1. Objective 1: Understand the process of state Medicaid funding
   2. Objective 2: Discuss how the Medicaid funding system affects health in Central Brooklyn
   3. Objective 3: List legislative and/or regulatory actions that contribute towards the Medicaid budget
   4. Objective 4: Critically analyze popular media publications
   5. Objective 5: Participate in evidence-based discussions on topics from popular media
2. Discussion Prompts:
   1. What are the political motivations behind the positions taken by Gov. Cuomo and Rep. Goffried in relation to state Medicaid funding? Who are the stakeholders each is targeting with their actions?
   2. How are the likely actions of the MRT-II going to affect your current practice? Your future plans?
   3. Is there any reasoning behind the timing of this intervention by Gov. Cuomo?
   4. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted this topic?
3. **Review Discussion:**

Description: Open discussion reviewing the asynchronous sessions of the past week and tying them into the common curricular narratives, including but not limited to: CDC policy development framework, Health care trends in central Brooklyn, Advocacy opportunities for students and residents in health care.

**Week 3**

Asynchronous sessions:

**1. Legal Advocacy, Medical Advocacy, And You**

Description: Physicians have special expertise in providing clinical care, but often struggle to extend their assistance to patients beyond medication management. This is especially relevant for marginalized populations who are often economically disadvantaged, have difficulties navigating the labyrinthine infrastructure of safety-network hospitals, and often lack cultural congruence with their providers. At the end of this lecture learners will understand the legal framework through which patients access care, common problems that arise for patients, and how to best provide assistance to their patient community.

1. Goal: To develop an understanding of the legal framework through which health care services are provided
   1. Objective 1: Understand the areas and types of legal advocacy done by Legal Services and Legal Aid offices
   2. Objective 2: Understand how to recognize the role of bar associations and similar organizations in legal advocacy
   3. Objective 3: Identify legal advocacy organizations serving the Brooklyn borough
   4. Objective 4: Understand how to develop an awareness of legal issues with potential health/medical consequences
2. Additional media: None
3. **LGBTQ+ Health Policy**

Description: The LGBTQ+ community has a unique political history, representing a demographic diverse in its cultural, religious and geographic associations but unified in an experience of marginalization, discrimination and overall social isolation from family and community members. To best serve this population physicians should have a general understanding of the advocacy background behind the current LGBTQ+ movement and the systemic levers that have been used to suppress LGBTQ+ communities. At the end of this lecture learners will understand the movement, be able to list examples of legislative and regulatory discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals and understand how the physician community has addressed LGBTQ+ disparities over time.

1. Goal: To understand the history of the LGBTQ+ advocacy movement and how to best advocate for the community today
   1. Objective 1: List commonly accepted terms related to sexuality and gender identity
   2. Objective 2: Discuss policy topics relevant to LGBTQ+ healthcare
   3. Objective 3: Understand how national and local policies affect LGBTQ+ communities in Central Brooklyn
   4. Objective 4: List advocacy opportunities for students and residents
2. Additional media: None

Synchronous sessions:

**1. Current Topics Discussion: Affordable Care Act (ACA)**

Description: Current topics discussion provides a venue for learners to discuss current topics of interest and share news and data-driven literature. By creating a learning medium where participants can contribute to creative discourse on health care policy, we hope to create an environment of innovation leading to effective systemic reform.

1. Goal: To discuss the present and future of the ACA
   1. Objective 1: Discuss the role of the separate branches of government in developing and implementing health policy, particularly as it pertains to the ACA
   2. Objective 2: Identify the current threats to the continued existence and smooth functioning of the ACA
   3. Objective 3: Define the legal concept of ‘severability’ and discuss how it applies to the ACA
   4. Objective 4: Identify the portions of the ACA that are most vulnerable to future repeal
2. Readings:
   1. https://thehill.com/opinion/judiciary/490860-what-if-the-supreme-court-strikes-down-the-aca-during-the-covid-19-pandemic
   2. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/do/10.1377/hblog20200302.149085/full/>
3. Discussion Prompts:
   1. What are some of the ways in which the American judiciary has left its mark on the ACA?
   2. How did the zeroing out of the individual mandate penalty leave the rest of the ACA more (legally) vulnerable?
4. **Writing/Resolution Workshop**

Description: The third workshop in a series of 4, students are given an opportunity to discuss both resolution and writing project ideas, outlines, and written content.

1. **Review Discussion**

Description: Open discussion reviewing the asynchronous sessions of the past week and tying them into the common curricular narratives, including but not limited to: CDC policy development framework, Health care trends in central Brooklyn, Advocacy opportunities for students and residents in health care.

**Week 4**

Asynchronous sessions:

**1. Firearms in the United States**

Description: A look at the policy and political factors underpinning the national debate on gun violence and the legal framework that governs doctor-patient interaction on firearms

1. Goal:  To understand the role of physicians within the larger national dialogue on gun violence
   1. Objective 1: Describe the legal framework governing physician decisions in patient cases involving firearm safety
   2. Objective 2: Discuss the moral responsibilities of physicians in relation to firearm violence
   3. Objective 3: Identify advocacy groups active in shaping firearm policy
   4. Objective 4: Identify avenues for advocacy and activism on the issue of firearm violence
   5. Objective 5: Assess the implications of legal interpretation of the Second Amendment over time

**2. Immigration Policy**

Description: The United States is a country built on immigration, beginning with the first people from Asia to the European diaspora, and the evolution to our current immigration environment. Vignettes from the lives and families of active political figures as well as the juxtaposition of the Cuban and Haitian immigration history help the learner understand trends in U.S. immigration policy, and how they affect patients’ daily experiences. Learners will complete this lecture able to list trends in refugee health, list advocacy opportunities in New York City, and understand how immigration policy translates to clinical outcomes.

1. Goal: Develop an understanding of immigration policy in the U.S. and its effect on health care
   1. Objective 1: Define terms related to Immigration Policy
   2. Objective 2: List historical trends in U.S. immigration
   3. Objective 3: Describe political trends in U.S. immigration reform
   4. Objective 4: Describe how immigration policy affects immigrant health
   5. Objective 5: Describe immigration policy initiatives in NYC

Synchronous sessions:

**1. Current Topics Discussion: Federalism in Health Care**

Description: Current topics discussion provides a venue for learners to discuss current topics of interest and share news and data-driven literature. By creating a learning medium where participants can contribute to creative discourse on health care policy, we hope to create an environment of innovation leading to effective systemic reform.

1. Goal: To understand the role of federalism in the U.S. healthcare system
   1. Objective 1: Define federalism
   2. Objective 2: List examples of how federalism is expressed in U.S. healthcare
   3. Objective 3: Discuss the public health responsibilities of the various levels of government
   4. Objective 4: Critically analyze popular media publications
   5. Objective 5: Participate in evidence-based discussions on topics from popular media
2. Discussion Prompts:
   1. How has America's unique brand of federalism made combating covid-19 more difficult?
   2. What level of government--federal, state, or local--generally carries the greatest responsibilities when it comes to public health?
   3. Historically, how would you characterize the role of the federal government (vis a vis other levels of government) when it comes to health care?
3. **Writing/resolution workshop**

Description: The final workshop session where resolutions and articles will be reviewed, shared, and discuss with peers and faculty.

1. **Review Discussion**

Description: Open discussion reviewing the asynchronous sessions of the past week and tying them into the common curricular narratives, including but not limited to: CDC policy development framework, Health care trends in central Brooklyn, Advocacy opportunities for students and residents in health care.