



THE UNIVERSITY *of* NORTH TEXAS  
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER *at* FORT WORTH

The RTT Collaborative 2024 Annual Meeting  
Rural Strong: Pathways to Peaks – Bridging the Gaps  
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# Primary Care Pathway Program: Bridging the Gaps to Reach Higher Peaks

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# Learning Objectives

At the end of this workshop, participants should be able to:

1

Articulate innovative strategies used to help rural students achieve their DReam while increasing the number of rural physicians.

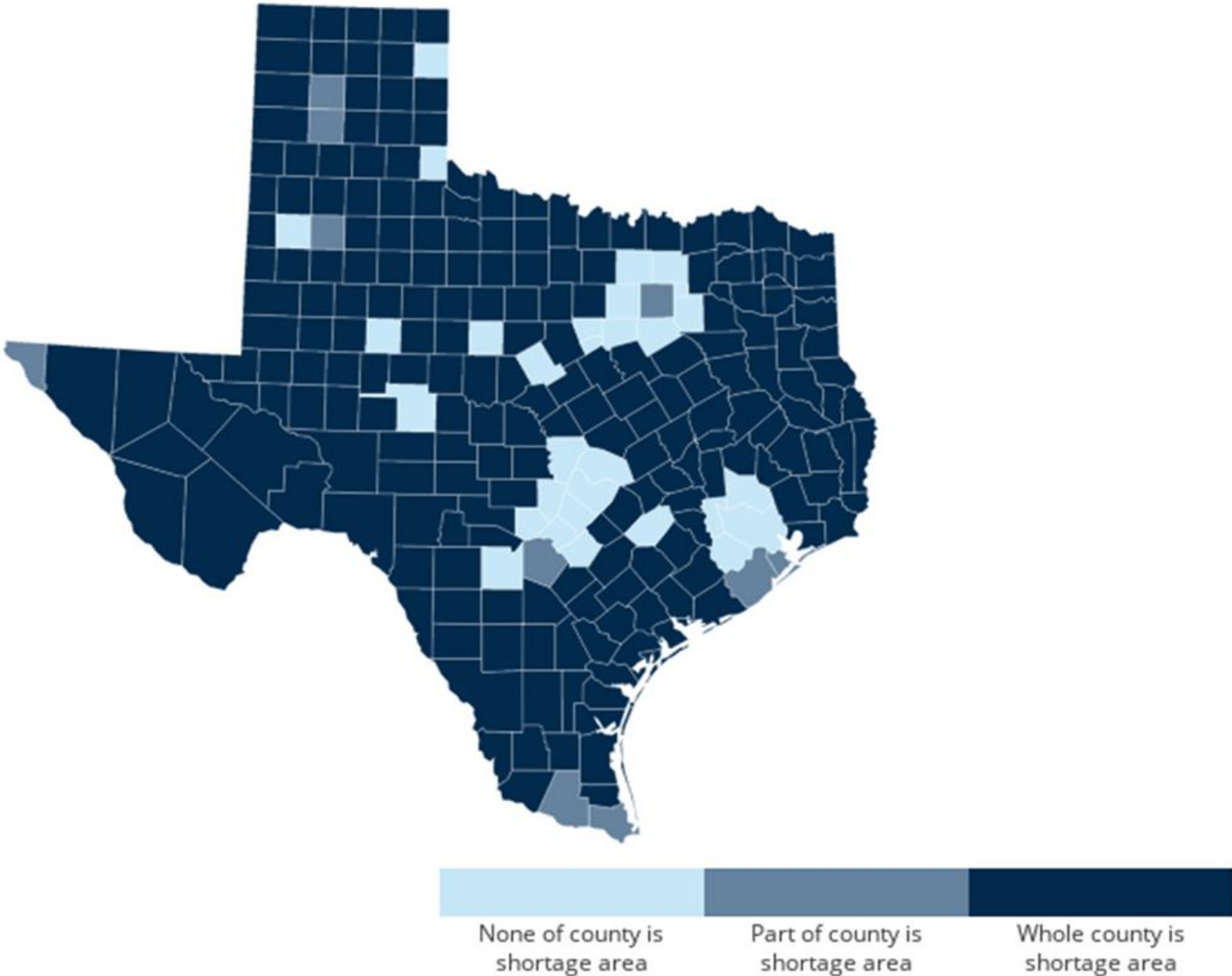
2

Identify key challenges and solutions utilized by institutions to bridge the gaps in pre-medical education for rural students.

3

Describe the mutual benefits of all stakeholders in partnering to reach higher peaks.

# Situation:



# Background:

“Unfortunately, rural students are underrepresented in medical schools, nationwide, and their numbers are declining.”

(Shipman, et.al.2019)

“The causes of the underrepresentation of rural students have been attributed to a shortage of applicants.”

(Anderson, et.al., 2009)

“Some studies indicate rural applicants are equally likely to be admitted to medical school relative to urban applicants.”

(Longo, et.al., 2005)

# Assessment:

## Known roadblocks for rural students, both educational and training

Physical  
isolation in  
geographic  
location

Less  
experienced  
instructors,  
high faculty  
turnover

Undependable  
broadband  
access

Limited funding  
from state and  
federal agencies

Small  
enrollment  
impacts  
resources and  
assessments

Little or no  
access to  
healthcare  
mentors and  
experiences

# Recommendations:

1. Identify and recruit **local** students who want to become rural physicians
2. Fortify students through an expedited pathway from community college to residency



# Primary Care Pathway Program:

- **Program objectives**

- Provide opportunities for students in underserved communities to attend medical school

- **Unique accelerated pathway to medical school**

“Because growing up in a rural area is a strong predictor of future rural practice, recruiting rural medical school applicants is an important strategy to boost the rural physician workforce.”

(Brooks, et al. 2002)

• 1 year of full-time study at University of North Texas in Denton  
• 4 years of full-time study at UNTHSC – TCOM

- **Why it works**

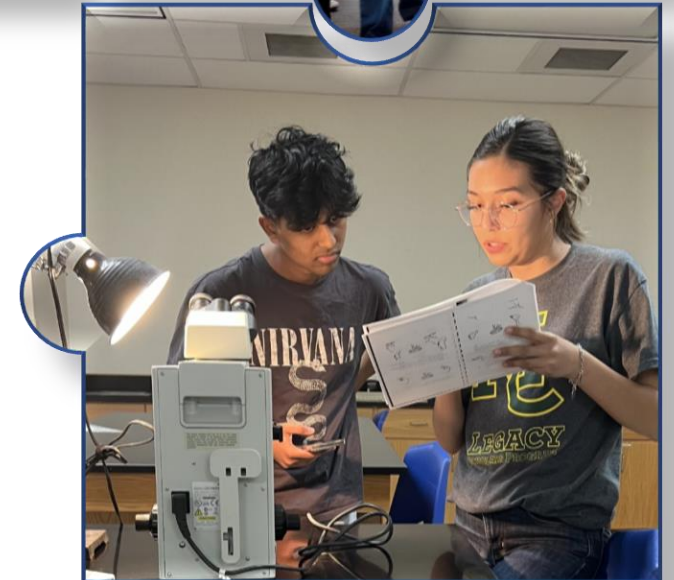
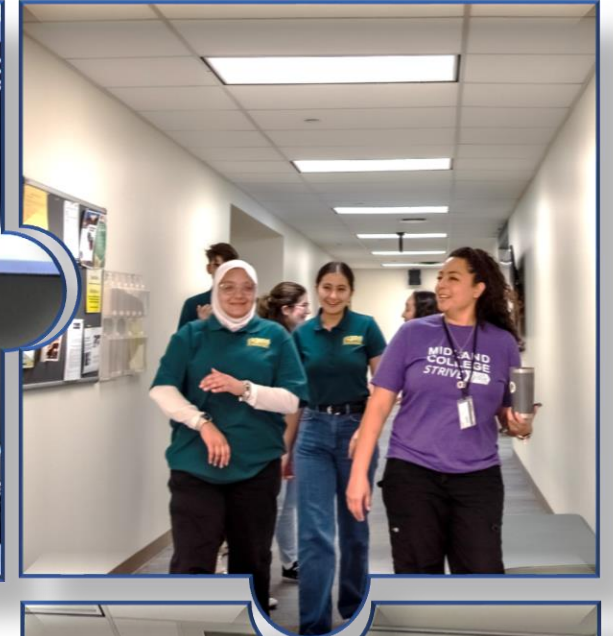
- Recruitment
- Cohort model
- Enhanced academics through custom cocurricular course
  - Life skills
  - Service learning
  - Experiential learning





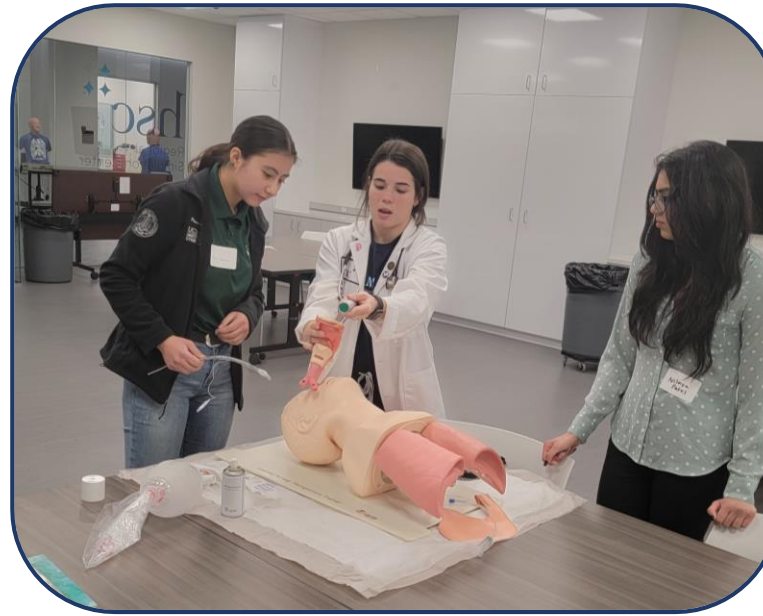
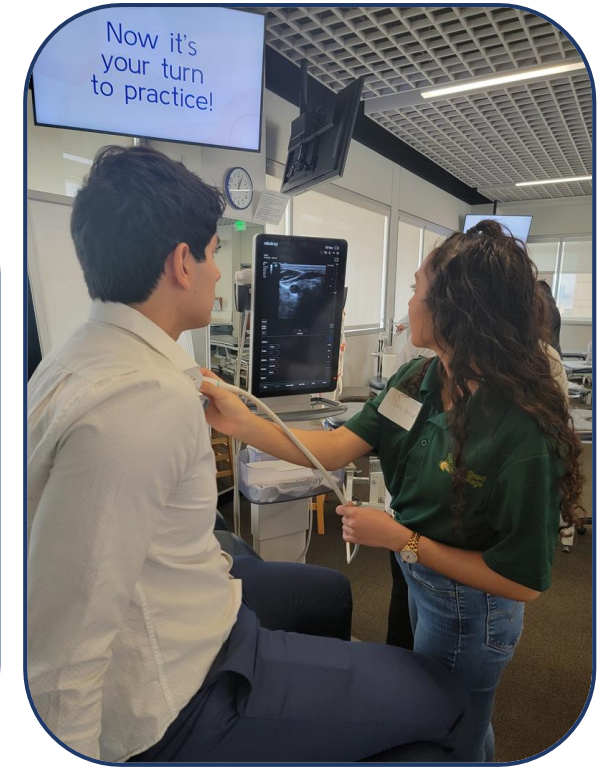
# Building the pre-med

- Directed guidance and mentorship
  - Remove barriers
  - Put the pieces together
- Weekly cocurricular
  - Experiential learning
  - Leadership
  - Community
  - Education



# Medically Related Experiences

- Preceptorships
- On-campus activities
- Partner-sponsored experiences
  - Internships
    - Local hospital
    - TCOM
- Rural medicine exposure
  - Medical mission trips
  - Rural clinics



# PCPP Matriculant

## Cognitive

- 3.5+ GPA BCPM
- 3.5+ GPA Overall
- 60+ hours of sciences
- Research competencies
- Clinical skills
- Proven study habits
- Time management

## Non-cognitive

- Leadership experience
- 50+ service-learning hours
- Culturally considerate
- Socially sensitive
- 160+ internship hours
- 100+ shadowing hours
- Research presentation

*Most importantly, PCPP students have changed their worldview, and are prepared for the realities of medical school.*

# Prerequisite Comparison

	TMDSAS required	TCOM required	PCPP required	Comments
Biology	12	12	33	Genetics, Anatomy & Physiology, Cell Biology, Microbiology, Animal Physiology, Pharmacology, Histology, Immunology
Biology Lab	2	2	7	
Chemistry	6	6	6	
Chemistry Lab	2	2	2	
O-Chemistry	6	6	6	
O-Chem Lab	2	2	2	
BioChemistry	3		3	
Bio-Chem Lab			1	
Physics	6	6	6	
Physics Lab	2	2	2	
English	6	6	6	includes Technical Writing
Statistics	3	3	3	
Pre-Calculus			4	
College Algebra			3	
required course hours	50	47	84	
Minimum total hours to apply	90	90		

<https://www.tmdsas.com/PLAN/medical/before-you-apply/education-requirements.html>

<https://www.unthsc.edu/texas-college-of-osteopathic-medicine/admissions-and-outreach/admissions-requirements-and-selection/>



**Rural Scholars Program (ROME) emphasizes  
family, home, and whole health**

**understanding the perspective of rural residents**

**including the residents' voices in healthcare decisions**

# PCPP Participants\*\*

CoHort	MC entry	# in cohort	MC Grad	TCOM matriculants	Current Status
Alpha	2015	5	5	0	
Beta	2016	18	4	4*	Internal Medicine Residency @ Loma Linda
Gamma	2017	24	6	6*	1 matched FM – Aurora CO 1 matched IM – Dallas Methodist
Delta	2018	18	7	4*	OMS III
Epsilon	2019	7	3	3	OMS II
Zeta	2020	9	4	4	OMS I
Eta	2021	3	1	1	@ UNT, entering TCOM July 2024
Theta	2022	7	4	4	@ MC, entering UNT fall 2024, accepted to TCOM for July 2025
Iota	2023	6			completing year 1 at Midland College
Kappa	2024	12			@ MC entering year 1 fall of 2024

\* The numbers reflect students who have taken a gap year and rejoined the next cohort.

\*\*anticipated status as of May 2024

“Technology should make education of all types more readily available in the future, regardless of location, but there will always be a strong element of medical education that involves hands-on work with patients and learning from skilled role models.”  
(Farmer, et.al., 2015)



# Acknowledgements

- Medical School Prerequisites –TMD SAS accessed 03/22/2024 <https://www.tmdsas.com/PLAN/medical/before-you-apply/education-requirements.html> accessed
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