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Campus-Community Partnership Is Good for the Health of All

A partnership between the University of Minnesota, Morris and Stevens Community Medical Center offers students life-changing opportunities and makes Morris stronger in the process.

The University of Minnesota, Morris works closely with community partners like Stevens Community Medical Center to make west central Minnesota a more vibrant, resilient place. This partnership offers students life-changing opportunities and makes both organizations—along with the Morris community—stronger in the process.

“We at the University share a goal with our partners at SCMC: to enrich quality of life for everybody in our region,” says Chancellor Michelle Behr. “We are a public resource, and we are proud to collaborate on initiatives that serve and unify our community.”

In both the short and long term, the UMM-SCMC partnership benefits students. Day-to-day, SCMC physicians provide health services to UMM students at campus Health Service. Each year they have nearly 10,000 student contacts with extremely high levels of student satisfaction.

“Good health is essential to student learning, potential, persistence, and success,” says Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Sandra Olson-Loy. “We are fortunate to partner with SCMC to make quality healthcare options available to our students.”

Students interested in health-related careers also shadow SCMC providers to gain practical experience while improving their resumes for future employment and graduate school applications. These experiences boost learning outcomes and lead to students’ future success.

“[UMM students] come in with a vision of what they want for the future, and they’re excited and appreciative of the opportunities to have conversations with our providers,” says Joan Spaeth, SCMC community outreach. “When you develop those relationships, you get to really learn about a profession: not what it is on paper, but what it is in practice.”

Students also take part in volunteer and internship opportunities at the health care facility. An Intellectual Community course does service learning with the hospital, and Office of Community Engagement (OCE) Days of Service often involve a project there. OCE also partners with the facility to host a Community Meal at its annual Fall Into Health event.

According to Spaeth, student contributions to the healthcare facility enhance the vitality of not only the Morris community, but also the practice of rural medicine. Having students observing and engaging with providers keeps them on their toes, “refreshing their skill set and enthusiasm in their careers.” Student volunteers add to the patient experience, too, and feel connected to the facility. The result, she says, is a strong, united community.

“I don’t think SCMC would be the facility that it is without having students here,” she says.

To learn more about campus-community partnerships, visit morris.umn.edu/outreach.