

UT Southwestern Student-Run Free Clinics: Experience, Research, and Impact | 2022

“While we were focused on examining the clinic’s future, UT Southwestern medical students made the future the present by organizing a Monday evening adult clinic.”

Note, North Dallas Shared Ministries Board Meeting (October 2, 2006)

UT Southwestern student-run free clinics (SRFCs) provide valuable clinical learning experiences, community connections and insight, research experience, leadership development, and needed public health services to the underserved across North Texas.

From initial student outreach in 2006 to five clinical sites today in 2022 providing services across multiple practice areas, more than **883 unique students** and other UT Southwestern health profession students have participated in this initiative between 2016 and 2020.

The Student-Run Free Clinic Experience

Student-Run Free Clinic goals include providing medical care of patients who may not receive such care elsewhere, while providing an educational experience for health profession students.

In addition to service learning for UT Southwestern medical students, other health profession students participate in SRFC work, including graduate students at UT Southwestern’s School of Health Professions and pharmacy students on the Dallas Campus of Texas Tech University Health Science Center Jerry H. Hodge School of Pharmacy.

Student teams serve patients in a supervised learning environment:

- Teams see patients independently before the attending practitioner.
- Learners then report to the attendings and see the patient once again with the attending.
- All clinics have access to medication rooms and can dispense certain medications to patients, as needed.



(Photo taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic)

Interprofessional Education and Practice

In 2016, Texas Tech pharmacy students joined the SRFC team at Union Gospel Mission. This collaboration grew further when the pharmacy students joined in the work at Agape Clinic in 2017 and North Dallas Shared Ministries in 2018. Students at the clinics collaborate on patient care and various quality improvement (IRB exempt) projects as well as education and joint presentations.

Since the beginning, students have worked together on multiple presentations, including peer review abstracts and posters, and a peer review publication is currently under revision. (*Higbea AM, Kong SY, Chauh A, Speed S. Impact of virtual opioid overdose and naloxone training for students, clinicians, and non-medical volunteers and employees within free clinics.*)

In addition to medical and pharmacy students, the clinics at Union Gospel Mission and Agape have physician assistant students and undergraduate students.

Free Clinic Committee

As students became involved with other specialty clinics and the multidisciplinary clinic at Agape, the need to coordinate services likewise grew.

Dr. Gimpel shared that “it got to the point where these clinics just started popping up and were mentioned to me before I even knew students were getting involved. It was just happening.” Thus, the Free Clinic Committee (FCC) was formed in 2015 to centralize the student-run free clinics and form a coordinated effort to sustainably, and safely, get involved in the community.

Dr. Gimpel explained there was a growing need to be sure that service-learning challenges, liabilities, and supervision involved with student-run free clinics was actively being considered. As students became increasingly enthusiastic about going out into the community, the FCC became a space to establish ground rules and work toward expanding students’ aspirations in an organized fashion. On top of this, Dr. Gimpel noted how students oftentimes “jumped between clinics” and worked with several of the student-run free clinics at once. To her, this was a missed opportunity to collaborate and work on improving each of the clinics together, while also learning and serving together. With the formation of the FCC, Dr. Gimpel applied for and was awarded a grant from the Southwestern Academy of Teachers (SWAT) to support the initiative. Funds were used to subscribe for an online volunteer sign-up platform used by all four clinics, to provide travel stipends for students presenting projects at conferences across the country, and to support the FCC summit, a yearly transition meeting for new and old clinic leaders.



UT Southwestern
Free Clinic
Committee

An additional source of funding for students involved in the SRFCs has been the Nancy Volk Educational Fund. After Ms. Volk's passing in 2014, the fund was created to support students' service-learning initiatives in community clinics. Donations are collected through the Southwestern Medical Foundation and have been used to provide stipends for students attending the Society of Student-Run Free Clinics' annual conference. To date, six students have been provided funds for use toward travel, housing, food, and registration fees to attend the conference, present their research, and represent UTSW.

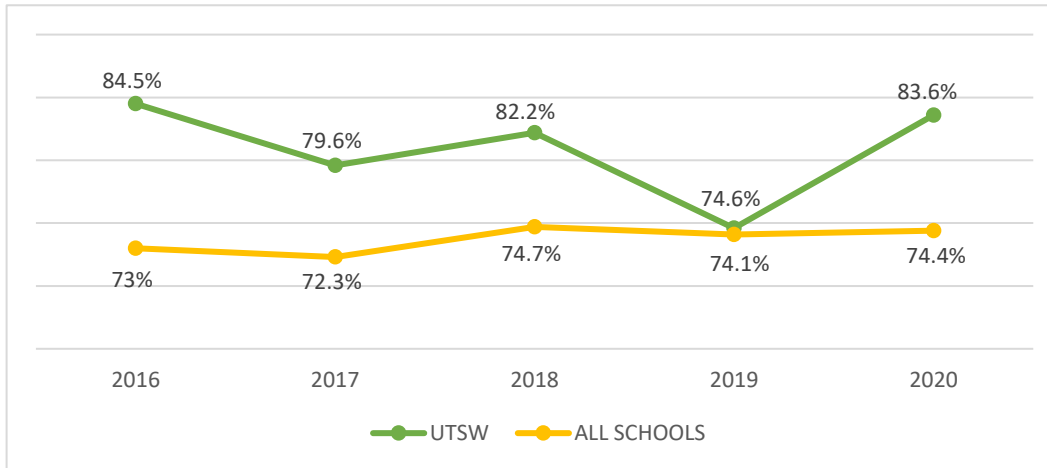
Now in its 15th year, The Monday Clinic is joined by UGM's Calvert Place clinic, UGM's Center of Hope clinic, and the Agape Clinic in providing indispensable opportunities for UTSW student volunteers to serve the local Dallas community. UTSW has contractual relationships with NDSM and UGM, which consist of 8 hours of medical directorship at NDSM and 12 hours of clinical service of a hired Advance Practice Provider at UGM. Additionally, UTSW students and volunteer faculty have worked to form strong ties with the Agape Clinic and Brother Bills' Helping Hands (since 2021).

In 2020, Dr. Gimpel expanded her involvement with SRFCs to a national level, joining the board of the Society of Student-Run Free Clinics. Looking to the future, Dr. Gimpel shared, "I've become jealous of what other clinics are doing across the country, and I realize that we're only in our childhood of all this and there is so much more to be done!"

Impact by the Numbers

The opportunity to volunteer, learn, and serve the community through student-run clinics (SRFC) are popular with UT Southwestern medical students. At the beginning of each month, students sign up for a volunteer time slot at one of the four clinics. These volunteer slots are filled very quickly, sometimes within minutes, showing what an immensely positive and impactful opportunity clinic experiences are for students. Since 2016, across the four student-run free clinics, more than **16,200 volunteer hours** were recorded by our students. The final count for 2020 was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the 2020 Medical School Graduation Questionnaire administered by the AAMC, **83.6% of UTSW graduates participated in free clinic experiences**, compared to 74.4% nationwide. UT Southwestern has consistently scored above the national percentage in this category, showing the student body's interest and dedication to free clinic volunteering, especially with UT Southwestern's student-run free clinics.



Clinic Operations and Services

SRFC provide students with service-learning opportunities that develop the whole physician and health care provider—leader, empathetic provider, operations executive, and community volunteer. Students have the opportunity to practice their physical exam skills and bedside manner, as well as interact with patients, health professions students, and UT Southwestern physicians. SRFC experiences also develop student’s commitment to working with underserved communities.

Following are descriptions of the clinics currently in operation at UT Southwestern.

The Monday Clinic | North Dallas Shared Ministries

- Student clinic established 2006
- Hours: Mondays, 5-9 p.m.
- Patients served: 3-4, average each week
- Patient Population: Uninsured individuals, primarily Hispanic, residing in 22 nearby Dallas zip codes
- Clinic handles acute problems on both walk-in and scheduled basis
- Student managers can draw labs to send out and do point-of-care testing, such as urinalysis and wet preps
- All patients are educated on Parkland Financial Services



- Pharmacy students volunteer to help dispense medications out of the medication room at NDSM
- In addition to health care, many other services are provided at NDSM, including eye exams and glasses, dental care, behavioral health counseling, food assistance for families and seniors, tax preparation, ESL classes, uniforms and school supplies, clothing, job counseling, and SNAP/MEDICAID application assistance

Union Gospel Mission

- Student clinic established 2013
- Hours, Center of Hope (serving women and children): Tuesdays, Thursdays 3-6 p.m.
- Hours, Calvert Place (serving men): Wednesdays, 5-8 p.m.
- Patients served: 9, average each week
 - Center of Hope: three patients
 - Calvert Place: six patients
- The patient population: predominantly Black and English-speaking homeless individuals
 - Center for Hope also serves women and children victims of trauma
 - The insurance status of patients varies from not having insurance to having employer-sponsored insurance, VA insurance, the Parkland Plan, Medicaid/Medicare, or being seen at the Parkland H.O.M.E.S. clinics.
- Clinic initiative:
 - Students run a Smoking Cessation Program at both clinics on Tuesdays from 5-7 p.m. to help reduce the prevalence of nicotine dependence in the homeless population. The program includes weekly group discussions, private interviews, and providing nicotine patches and gums.



Agape Multidisciplinary Clinic

- Student clinic established 2006
- Hours: vary per clinical focus and attending practitioner, usually one day each week, including some weekends
- Patients served: 3-4, average each week with scheduled appointments
- Patient population: Spanish-speaking
- Clinic services includes primary care, dermatology, ophthalmology, and occasional specialties per attending provider, including endocrinology, pediatrics, and ENT



Brother Bill's Helping Hand Clinic

- Student clinic established 2021
- Hours: 6-9 p.m. bi-weekly
- Patients served: 3-4, average each week
- Patient population: underinsured and uninsured individuals in the West Dallas and Oak Cliff areas of Dallas, although patients are not turned away who live beyond these neighborhoods
- Clinic initiatives:
 - Diabetes self-management program with a cohort of 20 medical students paired with 20 patients; this longitudinal program includes monthly student/patient meetings for an hour to review education material and set SMART goals. These meetings are usually scheduled during clinic nights, but patients can also meet students via zoom or during the day at the clinic.
 - Vaccine administration and education program that provides vaccine education to patients on clinic nights while the patients are waiting to be seen by the physician.



Medical students who founded the clinic in 2021, L to R: Maishara Muquith, Whitney Stuard and Leah Smith with Faculty Physician Nora Gimpel, M.D.

Research

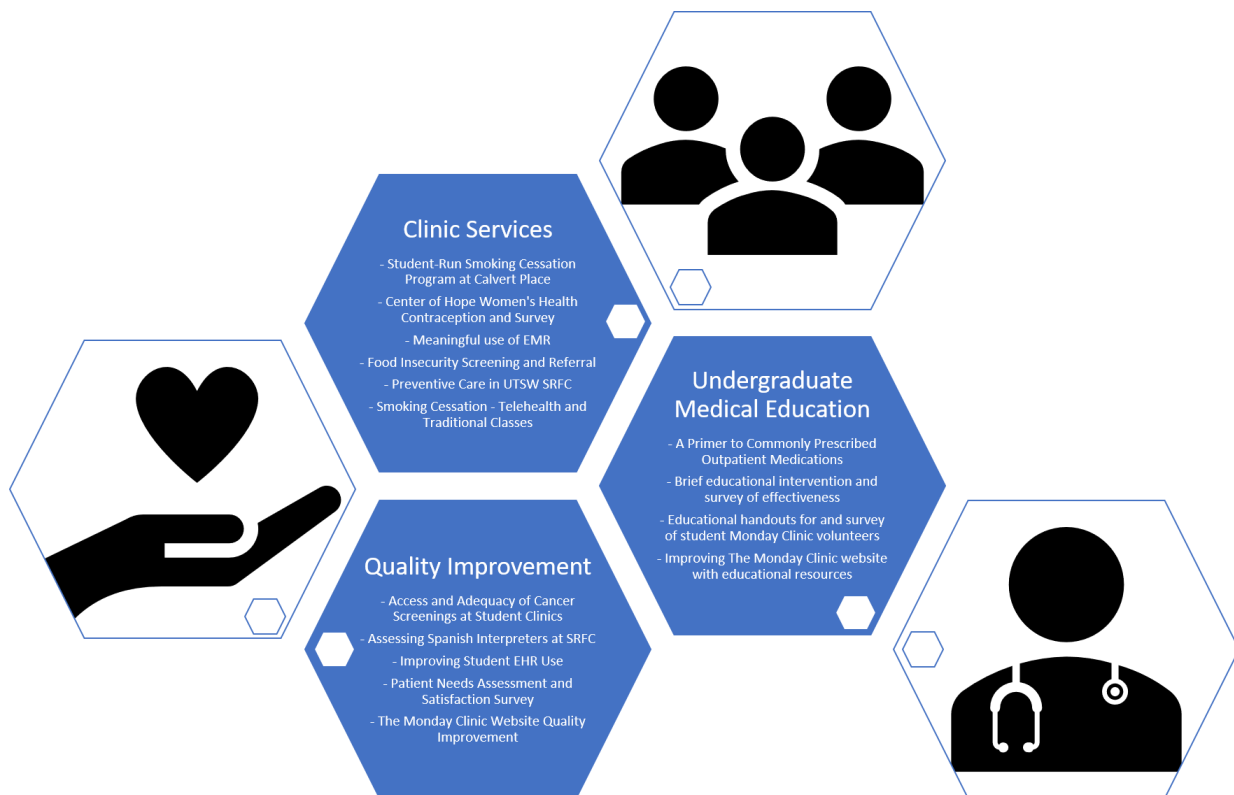
In addition to gaining valuable clinical experience and skills, students conduct research in a continual effort to improve the clinics and better serve the greater Dallas community, especially those in underserved, uninsured populations. Students have conducted research on everything from student education to quality improvement efforts to learning the scope and impact of clinical services.

Since the start of the *Service Learning at Dallas SRFCs* elective, many of the projects have been facilitated through the elective or through the *Community Medicine* elective. To date, students have been involved in approximately **50 research projects**. These projects have been presented at national conferences, submitted to academic journals, and used to improve the functions of the clinics.

Student research about the public health impact of these clinics provides a unique look at the impact of such clinics. Study findings are noted below and represent the impact of these clinics on the community at large.

- The scope of services provided and number of patients service by Dallas community charity medical clinics is broad. In fact, an estimated **4,767 unique patients were served over a one-year period by 6,792 physician and physician assistant encounters.**
- Of these encounters, 3,942 were identified and 2,148 or 54.5% were audited.
- The total value of services and medications provided for one year is estimated to be between \$840,278-\$845,737.
- The most prevalent diagnoses encountered were hypertension, diabetes, hyperlipidemia, and major depressive disorder.

Scope of Student Research Projects



In Their Own Words

Consider the following reflections from student-run free clinic volunteers. Their own words demonstrate student's commitment to service learning and understanding community needs through the lens of health care.

Why volunteer? "I was motivated primarily by a desire to gain new medical skills in caring for and treating patients. Because of the heavy course load in medical school, I wanted to find a way to remind myself of why I was here. Serving at The Monday Clinic helped me stay motivated during the hard months of study."



Ben Jacob
Chief Manager and
Campus Operations Manager
The Monday Clinic Volunteer
2018-2019

What have you learned? "I gained invaluable leadership skills. As Chief Manager, I was responsible for managing the team of six other managers. This gave me a taste of what running a practice as well as what working with colleagues on a joint enterprise of patient care would feel like. Working with the managers and the student volunteers gave me joy and I've made friendships and connections that I would not normally make."

Memorable moment? "While I have many memorable experiences at The Monday Clinic, I remember one night when I was helping interpret for the medical team and Dr. Wagner while they cared for a young lady with an upper respiratory tract infection. She was very worried about getting better and being able to return to work. Because she only spoke Spanish, I was placed right between the medical team and the patient, intently listening to both sides. This gave me a unique vantage point to see the beauty of medical care unfold. When the interaction began, the patient was tense and nervous, with folded arms and anxious eyes. As the team began to tell her what was going on, she seemed to relax slightly. When they asked her clarifying questions, she responded eagerly and seemed to want to offer what she could. As treatment was prescribed and given, she looked relieved and more confident than she was at the beginning. As the team left, she thanked each of us profusely and smiled brightly. I saw first-hand the power that a group of committed health professionals can have on someone's life. This experience, though simple, has stayed with me and helped me push through the hard times that inevitably come in medical school."



Patrick Lynch
The Monday Clinic Volunteer
2018-Present

What have you learned? "While many clinics provide students with clinical experiences, I feel that the teaching at The Monday Clinic is excellent. Student instruction is considered equally as important as patient care, and faculty volunteers and fourth-year medical students always dedicate time to teaching the presentation, pathophysiology, and

pharmacology of diseases. They also provide helpful feedback on how to improve my patient presentations. Although The Monday Clinic sees fewer patients than other clinics, I found that the patients often have very

interesting and unique pathologies. There are very few diagnoses I have seen twice while volunteering, and the clinical breadth and diversity is refreshing.”

Memorable moment? “My favorite aspect is the emphasis on education and development of young medical students. I distinctly remember Dr. Taylor lecturing us on biliary physiology and pathology prior to a patient encounter. We had not taken our Gastroenterology course yet, so the material was unfamiliar to me. However, after she explained the anatomy and pathology, we saw her patient, and it was an excellent example of the combination of education and clinical care that makes me happy to volunteer at The Monday Clinic.”

Why the Smoking Cessation Clinic? “I began volunteering with the Smoking Cessation Clinic in August of my first semester of medical school. I became the Data Manager of the clinic, and distributed surveys to those we served in order to compile feedback responses for quality and research purposes.



Hasan Seede
Smoking Cessation Manager
Union Gospel Mission Volunteer
2018-2019

I felt that getting involved as a manager was the best way for me to make an impact on the homeless population of Dallas at this stage in my career, as a student. Seeing how organized and effective the program was, and how motivated the patient participants were to learn and change their habits was my favorite aspect about working with the clinic.”

History

Knowing that students initiated the student-run free clinics work at UT Southwestern is important and a distinction of the type of students recruited to the institution. Their service to the community fills a critical need within the public health landscape and presents an ongoing unique educational opportunity for our medical and health profession students.

A note from a North Dallas Shared Ministries (NDSM) board meeting on May 3, 2007, describes the establishment of UT Southwestern Medical School’s first student-run free clinic: “While this clinic exists as a component of North Dallas Shared Ministries’ clinic, the students are entirely responsible for recruiting volunteers and attending physicians and operating the clinic.” In the months preceding that board meeting, four UT Southwestern medical students worked diligently to turn the idea of student-run free clinics into a reality. They wanted to create more hands-on clinical volunteer opportunities for students in the surrounding underserved community.

Foundational Learning: Research Trip to California

Together with these students, Dr. Jim Wagner, Associate Dean of Student Affairs at the time and volunteer physician at NDSM since 2003, Dr. Nora Gimpel, faculty physician and current Medical Director at NDSM, and Dr. Mark DeHaven, Community Medicine Director in the Department of Family and Community Medicine,

began the formation of what is now known as “The Monday Clinic.” Dr. Wagner and the students traveled to California where they visited the Pacific Free Clinic and Arbor Free Clinic, both student-run free clinics associated with Stanford University School of Medicine. They returned to Dallas and UT Southwestern with vision, ideas, and examples. The result? The formation of The Monday Clinic.

It made sense to Dr. Gimpel to work with a local community clinic, rather than a start-up new operation. “If I close my eyes,” Dr. Gimpel says, “I still remember when we went for a tour at NDSM and we learned about all the services they had.” The NDSM partners were delighted with the idea of a student-run free clinic and were notably supportive and welcoming of the students’ ideas. At the time, the clinic was only open during the day on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so the concept of a Monday evening clinic became critically important for adults who needed health care and could not take time off from work. It began slowly, with a few volunteers joining Dr. Wagner each Monday evening to learn and take care of patients. “Then, they were off,” Dr. Wagner shared, “And it’s been meeting pretty much every Monday since then.”

Legal and Operational Details

The formation of The Monday Clinic did not come without its challenges, however. There were many logistical measures to first address. For students and faculty to volunteer, they were required to have malpractice insurance coverage at NDSM, which was soon acquired. Additionally, faculty volunteers had to go through extensive credentialing to ensure appropriate care and supervision was being given to the population served. On the other hand, according to Dr. Wagner and others, there was never a challenge getting students to start volunteering, as they were always eager to get involved. Over time, the idea of creating “manager” roles became popular, an idea that came from the student volunteers themselves, who wanted to create roles and define responsibilities with the end-goal of building continuous relationships with the clinics and striving for sustainability.

Not long after the establishment of The Monday Clinic, UT Southwestern students became driven by a desire to build even more community partnerships. Student members of the Dermatology Interest Group approached the Agape Dermatology Clinic, a specialty clinic within the Agape Community Clinic that provides free dermatologic care to the local underserved, mostly Hispanic patient population. The students inquired about bringing medical students to volunteer at the clinic and, with open arms, the Agape administrators and Dr. Amit Pandya, UT Southwestern volunteer faculty, welcomed the students and offered them valuable opportunities to provide specialty care in the community.



UTSW students discuss a patient at the Agape Multidisciplinary Clinic (Photo taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic)

Soon enough, another student-clinic relationship began brewing. In 2010, another group of four medical students reached out to Patti Pagels, a faculty physician assistant in the Department of Family and Community Medicine. They wanted to form and lead another student-run free clinic at Union Gospel Mission (UGM) — just like The Monday Clinic. At the time, Ms. Pagels had just started working at UGM, a shelter serving the homeless population in Dallas. The shelter is divided in half, each with its respective clinic: Calvert Place, which serves men, and Center of Hope, which serves women and children. Initially, Ms. Pagels was hesitant to agree, given how little she had worked with the population she was just beginning to serve. “But I said, ‘Let’s go for it,’” Ms. Pagels shared, “and it was the best thing I ever agreed to, letting those four students start that whole process.”

Looking Forward: Continuous Improvement and Operational Growth

The future of UT Southwestern student-run free clinics is bright. Expanded learning opportunities and quality improvement are at the heart of the goals and vision for faculty and students alike. We envision such improvements as:

- Streamlined clinic flow and sustainable solutions for improvement, such as telemedicine and preventive care,
- Increased faculty volunteers to contribute to continuity of care and increase patient volume,
- Expanded institutional support through incentives and recognition to faculty (RVU credits),
- Increased storytelling across UT Southwestern social channels, and
- Strengthened and new connections with community organizations.

We will continue to support the students to enhance their leadership skills regarding clinic operations and work to expand knowledge and recruitment of these valuable experiences. Likewise, we will strive to make the community clinic experiences be the best possible for students and patients alike.

Thanks to the UT Southwestern ethos of education, discovery and research, and patient care, student-run free clinics are thriving in the greater Dallas area, providing necessary care to the underserved and contributing to well-rounded student learners and future health care workers.