

Teaching Sociology to Medical School Hopefuls: Developing Teaching Resources for the Sociology Content on the MCAT PI: Heather McKee Hurwitz, Ph.D. hxm56@case.edu

1. Project Description – Purpose, Rationale, Scope: Faculty in biochemistry, biology, chemistry, mathematics, and physics are experienced in preparing students for the MCAT. Over many years, they have developed extensive learning programs. They share these resources and teaching strategies with current instructors. For the first time in 2015, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) added several questions on social behavior to the MCAT. The addition of Social and Behavioral Science to the MCAT placed new pressures on instructors of sociology to train students planning to take the exam. However, there are extremely few resources, collaborative learning exercises, or detailed guides to assist sociology instructors to teach MCAT test takers. As a result, individual instructors must develop these materials on their own, leading to significant unevenness in what is taught and how it is taught.

This project aligns with UCITE’s goals to involve students in participatory learning, create innovative teaching techniques, and “think beyond the possible” by collaborating with students to use MCAT prep not as a way to learn flash cards of key sociological terms but fully develop their sociological critical thinking to prepare them for careers in medical fields. With funding from the UCITE Nord Grant, I will produce an annotated bibliography of available resources for preparing for the sociology portion of the MCAT and an explanation of the MCAT sociology requirements. I will develop several teaching activities and lecture outlines for teaching preparation for the sociology portion of the MCAT. Also, I will produce a report on strategies used in different disciplines, and current successful strategies already being used by sociology instructors to teach pre-med students. Each of these items will be shared across the University with faculty serving pre-med students. Also, I plan to submit a version of the teaching materials for publication on the American Sociological Associations’ Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology (TRAILS) and plan to upload the documents to a project website for use by interested instructors globally. A small investment in developing teaching materials for instructors across CWRU will garner an opportunity to be a leader across the nation in development of these materials.

2. Student Impact: Currently, a few introduction to sociology text books, like Dalton Conley’s *You May Ask Yourself*, include the list of MCAT concepts with page references so that students can look up each term easily. This approach does not facilitate students’ development of an integrated understanding of sociological perspectives and insights, and currently no thoughtful, illustrative teaching resource guides on how to incorporate systematically teaching MCAT prep alongside deep sociological learning in undergraduate university courses are available.

In addition to engaging with sociology and STEM faculty to learn best practices, I plan to engage students in a collaborative learning process as we explore the sociology portions of the MCAT and develop collaborative learning materials. After securing IRB approval in May 2019, I will recruit undergraduate students participate in focus groups from the large, diverse, and popular pre-med student organizations at CWRU including the professional pre-med fraternity, Phi Delta Epsilon OH Delta, and the CWRU chapter of the Pre-Medical Student National Medical Association, the latter of which is focused specifically on minority students. Approximately half of the fraternity members are women, the other half men, and a large number of people of color participate in the group. Leaders of the fraternity have committed to participate in such focus groups and they expect that members will be interested to assist with the literature review. Also, I will conduct snowball sampling of each organization’s alumni

network to conduct the focus group with students who have already taken the MCAT. The focus group will draw on their experiences of sociology and best practices for MCAT and medical school preparation. In addition the project will empower students as we collaboratively design appropriate teaching materials that go way beyond flashcards of key terms and instead stimulate their sociological critical thinking and training for future careers in medical fields.

3. Professional Impact: This project begins with my personal experience as a sociology instructor and the challenges I have had preparing students for the MCAT. The majority of students in my Introduction to Sociology courses at CWRU enroll to prepare for the MCAT. While I have developed several approaches to assisting pre-med students, I do not know which of the techniques and materials are most effective for delivering the most central points of this key domain of knowledge for MCAT preparation. This UCITE project seeks to fill the gap.

Instructors of sociology do not have a systematically designed and tested teaching materials to train students in sociological thinking who are going on to take the MCAT and pursue careers in medical fields. Sociologists have an opportunity to teach a new population of interested students from STEM fields but need more teaching resources to do so effectively. While I have run a MCAT prep in Sociology listserv for several years that provides supplementary articles and film suggestions for students seeking to prepare for the MCAT and learn the sociology of health and medicine, the Nord Grant will launch me into a leadership position nationally to provide appropriate and effective materials that assist both pre-med and sociology students and instructors. With the Nord Grant I will hone my collaborative teaching abilities in an area of vital importance to CWRU students.

4. Metrics and Data Collection: To address the gaps in collaborative learning to prepare pre-med students, I ask the following research questions: “What resources are the most useful and detailed for sociology instructors who teach premed students? How can instructors’ best use the materials? Which strategies best prepare students for the MCAT in other disciplines? What additional materials and future research is needed to teach sociology to pre-med students?” To address these questions I will undertake two projects. **First**, I will conduct a comprehensive literature review of available resources and develop an annotated guide to these materials. I will summarize recommended content for instruction and provide extensive explanation of the MCAT sociology requirements. By synthesizing existing resources, I will make teaching activities, lectures, and syllabus content readily accessible and user friendly for sociology instructors. Also, the review will identify teaching resources that need to be created with a future project. **Second**, I will convene focus groups with stakeholders to learn from their perceptions and experiences in sociological training, preparing for the MCAT, and going on to careers in medicine. These stakeholder groups will be: 1) current pre-med majors who are preparing to take the MCAT; 2) students who have taken the MCAT at least once since 2015 and have continued on to pursue careers in medical fields; 3) instructors who have developed successful strategies for preparing students to take the MCAT and be successful in medical careers. I will query faculty outside of sociology that are preparing pre-med students, especially instructors of CWRU IHSC 300: Synthesis of Premedical Concepts. 4) sociology instructors who have attempted to integrate MCAT material into their courses. I will target instructors of introduction to sociology, sociology of health, and medical sociology. I will conduct the focus group at the ASA annual meeting in New York City in August 2019.

A research assistant and I will attend and facilitate the focus groups, take notes, and transcribe the focus groups. All of the focus group notes and transcriptions will be entered into ATLAS.ti for qualitative content analysis. Upon immersing in the information gathered at the focus groups, I will

analyze the similarities and differences across groups. I will write up, report, and publish the literature review, focus group findings, and teaching resources. The IRB protocol will be submitted in May 2019 with approval expected by June 2019. The project will be conducted from July 2019 - June 2020. Results and products will be shared, submitted to TRAILS, and posted online in October 2019.

5. Department Contact: Michelle Rizzuto, Department Administrator michelle.rizzuto@case.edu
216.368.2214 Mather Memorial Building 226

Budget

The project budget corresponds to the goals of the project: 1) research, compile and annotate existing resources, 2) conduct focus groups with students and professional key informants, and 3) develop teaching materials and plan future research.

First, based on the advice of Hernandez (2016)¹, the research assistant and I will examine existing guides and resources as part of the literature review. Funds are needed to procure the materials and examine the official MCAT guides created by the agency that develops the test.

Second, the majority of funds will provide the principal investigator and research assistants with salary support to complete the literature review, annotated bibliography, focus groups, develop teaching resources, data analysis, and report the findings.

Third, I am requesting funds to conduct the focus groups

Item	Description	Detailed Costs
Books, guides, and online access to existing MCAT prep materials	Purchase of materials recommended in focus groups (\$150) and existing guides including Official MCAT Sample Test (\$25); Official MCAT Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills Question Pack, Volume 1 and 2 (\$30 total); Sterling (\$35), Princeton Review (\$29), and Kaplan’s (\$26) MCAT sociology review guides and sample questions	\$295
Principal Investigator	Recruitment of Focus Group Participants Literature review Conduct Focus Groups Analysis of Study Data Writing and Publishing Teaching Materials	30 hours @ \$40/hour \$1,200
One or Two CWRU Student Research Assistants	Assist with literature review Assist with conducting focus groups Assist with note taking, transcription, and analysis of focus groups	33 hours @ \$15/hour \$495
Focus Group Participants	Reimburse travel, parking, and compensation for the participation of six participants in each of four focus groups (24 participants total)	\$20/person \$480
Beverages for Focus Groups	Create a comfortable environment and assist in building rapport with research participants	\$30
Transportation	Roundtrip Airfare to ASA Meeting NYC to conduct Focus Group	\$177
Total		\$2,677

¹ <http://www.asanet.org/news-events/footnotes/jan-2016/research-policy/teaching-premedical-students-sociology-classroom>

Heather McKee Hurwitz

Case Western Reserve University, Department of Sociology, 226 Mather Memorial Building,
10900 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44106 hxm56@case.edu 216-368-8847

EMPLOYMENT

- 7/2018-present Full Time Lecturer, Case Western Reserve University, Sociology, Core Research Faculty
Women's and Gender Studies interdisciplinary program
9/2015-6/2018 Post-Doctoral Fellow, Barnard College, Columbia University, Athena Center for
Leadership, Sociology

EDUCATION

- PhD University of California Santa Barbara, Sociology, June 2015, Chair of Dissertation-Verta Taylor
Interdisciplinary Doctoral Emphasis in the Department of Feminist Studies
Interdisciplinary Doctoral Emphasis in the Program in Global & International Studies
Certificate in College and University Teaching
MA University of California Santa Barbara, Sociology, 2010
MA University of the Philippines, Diliman, Women and Development Studies, 2002
BA The George Washington University, Sociology, Honors Program, Magna Cum Laude, 2001

SELECT AWARDS

- 2019 Nominee, Carl F. Wittke Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, CWRU
2019 Nominee, J. Bruce Jackson, MD, Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Mentoring, CWRU
2017 Nominee, Emily Gregory Award for teaching, Barnard College, Columbia University
2013 Nominee, Graduate Student Association Excellence in Teaching Award, UC Santa Barbara

SELECT TEACHING - Independent Instructor, Undergraduate Courses

- 2018-present **Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH (3-3 teaching load)**
Introduction to Sociology
Work and Family
Advise one undergraduate Capstone
2015-2018 **Barnard College, Columbia University, New York, NY (2-2 teaching load)**
Global Activism, Sociology
Gender and Organizations, Sociology/Athena Center for Leadership Studies
Women and Leadership, Athena Center for Leadership Studies
2018 Advise one undergraduate thesis project for the Department of Women's, Gender, and
Sexuality Studies.
2009-2014 **UC Santa Barbara (instruct 5 courses)**
2005 **Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, OH (instruct Intro. to Women's Studies)**

SELECT RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Book – In Progress** *America in the Streets: The Occupy Movement and the Intersectional Feminist Imperative*
Temple University Press and New York University Press are interested; I am revising and
resubmitting the manuscript
Forthcoming Hurwitz, Heather McKee. "Followers in a Leaderless Movement: Gender and Race Dynamics
and Discriminatory Resistance in the Occupy Wall Street Movement" *Mobilization*.
2018 Hurwitz, Heather McKee. "#FemGA #SayHerName #NotHereForBoys: Feminist
Spillover in US Social Movements 2011-2016." In *Nevertheless They Persisted: Feminisms and
Continued Resistance in the U.S. Women's Movement*, edited by Jo Reger. New York: Routledge.



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Department of Sociology
Case Western Reserve University
10900 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44106-7124

April 5, 2019

University Center for Innovation in Teaching and Education
Allen Memorial Medical Library Building, Room 101
11000 Euclid Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44106

Visitors and Deliveries
226 Mather Memorial

Phone 216.368.2700
Fax 216.368.2676

www.case.edu/artsci/soci

Dear UCITE Nord Grant Review Committee members:

I write in strong and enthusiastic support of Dr. Heather Hurwitz's application for a Nord Grant application entitled "Teaching Sociology to Medical School Hopefuls: Developing Teaching Resources for the Sociology Content on the MCAT". Dr. Hurwitz is a full-time lecturer in Sociology who is a fine teacher, as evidenced by her nomination this spring for both the Wittke Award and the Jackson Award as well as by her teaching evaluations and by senior faculty classroom observation.

Dr. Hurwitz's proposal aligns well with UCITE's goal and priorities because it involves students in participatory learning, and creates innovative teaching techniques for a high-demand and important educational objective – MCAT preparation for pre-med students. It entails faculty-student collaboration that are designed to produce a replicable method of MCAT preparation that rejects the "flash card" learning approach, and instead focuses on ways to enable students to understand a sociological perspective, enabling them to grasp the range of issues of diversity, of social dynamics and of human concern that the medical profession envisioned when calling for more social science understanding in the backgrounds of entering doctoral students.

I believe that this program would offer an advantage not our students immediately and that, longer term, it could develop as a valuable for social scientists teaching pre-med students in other universities as well. I strongly believe that supporting this project would be a credit to the Nord Grant program.

In sum, I heartily support Dr. Heather Hurwitz's application. If I can provide any additional information that will be helpful to your decision-making, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dale Dannefer".

Dale Dannefer
Selah Chamberlain Professor of Sociology
Chair, Department of Sociology