

OXIHHER / EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE PROGRESS REPORT

APRIL 30, 2026



XAVIER
UNIVERSITY of LOUISIANA

INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH EQUITY AND RESEARCH

The Ochsner Xavier Institute for Health Equity and Research (OXIHHER), now operating under the Office of Community Empowerment (OCE) at the Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine (XOCOM), continues to advance work across education, community engagement, research, and workforce development. This quarter's updates highlight progress in medical education and accreditation, growing community partnerships, national and academic leadership, and the development of a strong and diverse healthcare workforce—alongside recognition of individuals driving meaningful impact.

ADVANCING MEDICAL EDUCATION & ACCREDITATION

MARCH 17, 2026

XOCOM Accreditation Prep: Mock Site Visit

On March 17, the XOCOM Office of Community Empowerment (OCE) convened a community partner meeting in preparation for the upcoming Liaison Committee of Medical Education accreditation visit.

During the gathering, select community partners shared their vision for the medical school and its future graduates, reinforcing the vital role of community partnership in advancing medical education and improving community health. Partners expressed enthusiasm for helping students understand that they are part of a community that supports, uplifts and invests in their success.

OXIHHER plays an important role in connecting students with meaningful experiential learning opportunities across internal and external partners, allowing students to develop skills to collaborate with communities, advocate for policy and systems change and lead improvements in population health.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & VISIBILITY

MARCH 14, 2026

XOCOM and OXIHHER Engage Community at Health and Wellness Family Expo

On March 14, the XOCOM participated in the 5th Annual Health and Wellness Family Expo in New Orleans East, an event sponsored by NORD, Ochsner Health and The Links, Inc. (Pontchartrain Chapter), bringing together community members and partner organizations around a shared commitment to improving community health.

During the Expo, the team shared updates on the accreditation progress of the new medical school and highlighted the evolution of the Ochsner Xavier Institute for Health Equity and Research. OXIHHER, now operating under XOCOM's Office of Community Empowerment, continues to strengthen a growing network of partners advancing community engagement, workforce development, population health outcomes, research, and health advocacy and policy.



Pictured left to right: Matthew Broussard, Dr. Yvens Laborde and Tonia Moore, Ochsner Health, with Sheryl Kennedy Haydel, President, The Links, Inc. Pontchartrain Chapter and Larry Barabino, Jr., CEO, NORD.

Ochsner Health leaders and OXIHHER steering committee members Tonia Moore and Matthew Broussard were integral to the event's success. As part of OXIHHER's advocacy partnership with Xavier University of Louisiana's Mass Communication Department, Xavier scholar Brooklyn Netisingha attended the Expo as a student writer, documenting the community engagement initiative and contributing to the overall impact. Other attending OXIHHER team members included Ariyon C. Bryant, PhD, Eboni Price-Haywood, MD, Jewel Harden-Barrios, MEd, Maxwell Meadow, MD, Nicole Summers, Nicole Villemarette Pitman, PhD, William Kirchain, PharmD and Yvens Laborde, MD.

UPCOMING

Essence Festival of Culture

The XOCOM Office of Community Empowerment (OCE) is partnering with the Global Economic Black Forum (GBEF) to participate in the Essence Festival of Culture, July 3-5, 2026. The OXIHHER community engagement team will provide health screenings and education to the community at the GBEF Future of Health Neighborhood at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. OXIHHER will expand access to health screenings and connect with community members during one of the nation's largest cultural gatherings. Additionally, XOCOM leaders and clinical faculty are participating in healthcare panel discussions and health advocacy symposiums.

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NATIONAL & ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

FEBRUARY 28 – MARCH 2, 2026

OXIHHER Recognition at 19th Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA) Conference on Improving Health Outcomes

Team members from XOCOM, OXIHHER and Ochsner Research contributed to the 19th XULA Conference on Improving Health Outcomes, held February 28–March 2, 2026 in New Orleans. Their work spanned poster and podium presentations, panel discussions and moderated sessions highlighting key themes such as workforce development, public health preparedness and community-based participatory research. Several of the accepted presentations emerged from OXIHHER-led initiatives, which now operate within the XOCOM Office of Community Empowerment. This collective participation demonstrates alignment toward meaningful, community-centered improvements in population health.

Contributing team members include Ariyon C. Bryant, DrPH, MPH, Courtney Parke, PhD, DeAnna Broussard, DeQuan Smith, EdD, Nicole Villemarette Pitman, PhD, Maxwell Meadow, MD, Meena Mishra, PhD, Steven Crimaldi, and Yvens Laborde, MD.

MARCH 21, 2026

Clinical Scholars Action Network



On March 21, 2026, Dr. Eboni Price-Haywood was a keynote speaker for Clinical Scholars Action Network national conference on “Advancing Health Equity: Fostering Resilience in a Changing Climate”. Dr. Price-Haywood’s presentation, “The Fork in the Road: Leading Change Management through Public Health Crisis” explored how to optimize opportunities for healthcare transformation amid natural disasters, turning crisis into a foundation for

lasting change. She discussed the imperative for raising community awareness of the social drivers of health in response to pandemics and utilizing a data-driven approach to bridge equity gaps and measurably improve health outcomes for all populations.

APRIL 9, 2026

National Medical Association Region III & Region V Meeting

In alignment with its community engagement strategy, XOCOM is fostering a longitudinal health alliance with the National Medical Association. On April 9, 2026, Dr. Price-Haywood was a panel speaker on the medical school moderated panel, “Medical Schools: The Bridge Between the Undergraduate Pipeline and the Healthcare Workforce.” OXIHHER hosted a table at the National Medical Association Region III & Region V PREP Rally: Careers Pathways in Health & Wellness Fair at Southern University in Baton Rouge. Also at the table were Xavier’s Genetic Counseling and Physician Assistant programs.



Shown are top, Ariyon C. Bryant, DrPH, MPH, and bottom, Yvens Laborde, MD, at the XULA Conference on Improving Health Outcomes. Center photo is of Steven Crimaldi, MTS, MSc with William Kirchain, PharmD, CDE.



OXIHHER’s Ariyon C. Bryant, DrPH, MPH and Jewel Harden-Barrios, ME, third and fourth from left, with members of Xavier’s Genetic Counseling and Physician Assistant programs at the National Medical Association Region III & Region V PREP Rally at Southern University in Baton Rouge.

BUILDING THE HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

FEBRUARY 2, 2026

OXIHER Welcomes Third Cohort of Louisiana Collaborative for Diversity in Nutrition Scholars

OXIHER is pleased to once again partner with the Louisiana Collaborative for Diversity in Nutrition to welcome its third cohort of Nutrition Scholars.

On Monday, February 2, the scholars began their 10-week experiential program providing undergraduate students with hands-on exposure to both clinical and non-clinical healthcare settings while highlighting the critical connection between nutrition, physical activity and improved health outcomes. Through interactions with senior physician leaders, scholars learned about health disparities, AI, food security, research and career pathways in healthcare leadership.

2026 NUTRITION SCHOLARS & MENTORS

- **Gevon Finley**, Junior, Nursing Major, Dillard University; **Mentors:** Irielle Banks, NP, and Emily Garrets, RD, Ochsner Center for Primary Care & Wellness
- **Yoann Gueye**, Junior, Biology Major, Dillard University; **Mentor:** Dr. Olabode Agaja, Senior Physician, Ochsner Sports Medicine Institute and Dillard Team Physician
- **Karrie Spears**, Senior, Public Health Major, Dillard University; **Mentors:** Irielle Banks, NP, and Emily Garrets, RD, Ochsner Center for Primary Care & Wellness
- **Arin Dale**, Senior, Public Health Major, XULA; **Mentor:** Dr. Shannon Goode, Senior Physician, Ochsner Sports Medicine Institute and XULA Team Physician
- **Maya Hinkle**, Senior, Public Health Major, XULA; **Mentor:** Brittany Craft, Ochsner Eat Fit

MARCH 3, 2026

Ochsner Genetic Counselors Inspire Future Healthcare Leaders at Xavier University of Louisiana

On March 3rd, Ochsner Health genetic counselors participated in a dynamic on campus engagement at XULA, marking a new collaboration between OXIHER and the XULA Department of Chemistry.

Undergraduate students interested in high-risk cancer care and genetics attended the event, where three Ochsner genetic counselors introduced students to cancer-related careers, the field of genetic counseling and modified shadowing opportunities to support career exploration. Their insights highlighted the role of genetic counseling in modern oncology and its impact on patient outcomes. Students left the event with greater knowledge of the field and inspiration for career options.

Hosted by the Cancer Education and Research Club, a student-led organization dedicated to addressing community health disparities through education and service, the session showcased OXIHER's expanding partnerships with HBCUs in health careers and workforce development. Through its workforce development efforts, OXIHER supports mentorship and experiential learning that prepare scholars for impactful roles in healthcare.



Hannah Haensel, MS, CGC, Hematology and Oncology; Mitch McElfresh, MGC, CGC, Hereditary Cancer; and Jericka Yehudah, MS, CGC, Hereditary Cancer.

Many thanks to Ochsner's Genetic Counseling team: Mitch McElfresh, MGC, CGC, Hereditary Cancer; Hannah Haensel, MS, CGC, Hematology and Oncology; and Jericka Yehudah, MS, CGC, Hereditary Cancer. Coordinating support was provided by Alix D'Angelo, MGC, LCGC, Senior Genetic Counselor, Cancer Genetics Hereditary and High-Risk Clinic.



Above and below: Students engage in hands-on activities at the YouthForce NOLA and Junior Achievement Career Expo in New Orleans. Photo credit: Biz New Orleans

MARCH 18, 2026

OXIHHER Expands K-12 Workforce Engagement through Continued Partnership with Ochsner Education Outreach

On Wednesday, March 18, OXIHHER partnered with Ochsner's Education Outreach at the YouthForce NOLA and Junior Achievement Career Expo at the UNO Lakefront Arena, engaging over 2,000 high school students in hands-on activities that promoted early awareness of healthcare careers. Students participated in CPR and respiratory therapy demonstrations, learning practical skills and public health concepts. This collaboration reflects OXIHHER's Health Careers and Workforce Development pillar, which aims to build accessible pathways for students into healthcare fields through early exposure and ongoing engagement.



RECOGNITION & IMPACT



Congratulations to **Dr. Maxwell Meadow**, an OXIHHER Research Fellow and Community Engagement leader who recently matched into his top choice for residency, the Internal Medicine—Primary Care Track at Ochsner Health.

As a Research Fellow, Maxwell has contributed to diverse projects to enhance care delivery for underserved populations, including scholarly writing, curriculum development, and community partnerships. He contributed to publications on the role of faith-based health initiatives in Louisiana as well as improving techniques for clinical documentation.

Maxwell is a key player in the development of OXIHHER's toolkit to guide partnerships between healthcare systems and religious organizations. His research highlights his advocacy for the humanitarian crisis in Haiti and was showcased at Northwestern's 2026 NCEAS Conference as well as XULA's 19th Conference on Improving Health Outcomes.



Dr. Yvens Laborde, Chief Community Medical Officer at Ochsner Health and co-leader of the OXIHHER Community Engagement pillar, has traveled to Haiti for the past decade to provide humanitarian aid through a clinic he established—FONDYLSAHH.

Following the recent devastation of Hurricane Melissa, Dr. Laborde returned to Haiti on a medical supply mission. The team focused on providing water supplies, sanitation equipment, food assistance, sheltering services and emergency healthcare. The hurricane impact and ongoing humanitarian crisis have resulted in flooding, damaged water systems and infectious contamination from deceased livestock resulted in the spread of Cholera and rare zoonotic infections such as Anthrax, Leptospirosis and Vibrio vulnificus infections. Patients also reported increased anxiety, depression and PTSD-like symptoms, in addition to physical injuries caused by the hazardous conditions.

Dr. Laborde's ongoing humanitarian work stands as a powerful example of his dedication to serving vulnerable communities and raising awareness about their needs on a global scale.

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