Long-term health inequities contribute to poor health in our communities. It’s a complex problem that requires novel solutions.
Contents

Introduction 2
Who Are We? 2
Why Ochsner? 4
Why Xavier University of Louisiana? 4
Vision & Mission 5
OXIHER’s Role 6
Strategic Framework 7
Investing In Health Equity 8
Our Strategic Priorities 10
Communication Strategy 22
Conclusion 24
OXIHER Team 25
Introduction

Who Are We?

Since the 1990s, Louisiana’s health score has continually ranked 49th or 50th compared to all other states according to America’s Health Ranking. The state health reports consistently demonstrate health disparities based on race/ethnicity, sex, gender, geographic location (urban/rural), income, educational attainment, and type of health insurance. To transform Louisiana’s overall health through a lens of equity, Ochsner Health and Xavier University of Louisiana launched a groundbreaking collaborative, the Ochsner-Xavier Institute for Health Equity and Research (OXIHER).

Ochsner and Xavier will combine resources to work across their network of partner health providers, government, insurers, employers, schools, and other community organizations. OXIHER will inform all aspects of our strategy as a catalyst for moving Louisiana’s overall health ranking.
Through our partnership, we leverage the academic and research-based strengths to bring awareness to health disparities in our communities, educate providers to perpetuate a culture of equity and train more students to advanced careers in healthcare. We believe that clinical expertise, data, knowledge and action will lead to improved health for the people in the communities we serve.”

EBONI PRICE-HAYWOOD, MD
Introduction

**Why Ochsner?**

As the largest academic health system in the state, Ochsner is strategically positioned to be a driving force for change. The institution coordinates efforts to align the public health ecosystem with a shared agenda, which is especially crucial in the contemporary landscape, emphasizing social justice and the elimination of health inequity.

**Why Xavier University of Louisiana?**

Xavier, ranked as the third-leading Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the nation, boasts significant achievements in producing African American medical doctors and alleviating students from poverty. This positions Xavier as the ideal partner to co-lead, expand and deepen efforts toward health equity and community wellness.

OXIHER is a collaborative powerhouse poised to transform healthcare paradigms, champion equity, and contribute substantially to the well-being of Louisiana’s diverse communities. The strategic partnership between Ochsner and Xavier is grounded in a shared vision for a healthier, more equitable future.
Vision & Mission

Vision

Improve the overall health of our communities

Mission

1. Inform strategies to improve Louisiana’s overall health ranking
2. Reduce health inequities
3. Develop innovative healthcare delivery models
4. Model equitable and respectful care
Ochsner and Xavier join forces to:

✔ Act as a convener and combine resources to work across a broad spectrum of partners, including state and local leaders, government officials, health providers, health insurers, employers, academic institutions and community organizations

✔ Provide multidisciplinary, cross-departmental expertise in health equity, education, clinical care, public health, business and more

✔ Leverage community engagement, outcomes research, population health strategies, workforce development, and educational initiatives as well as health advocacy to tackle challenges faced today

✔ Provide a health equity framework for the broader Healthy State initiative

---

Learn More ➔
The Ochsner-Xavier Institute for Health Equity and Research strategic framework is built around five guiding principles for improving the health equity and health status of Louisiana.

Outcomes Research
Population Health Management
Health Careers & Equity Education
Community Engagement
Health Advocacy & Policy
Investing in Health Equity

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded a $2.4 million grant to Ochsner Clinic Foundation to launch the Ochsner-Xavier Institute for Health Equity and Research.

The Kellogg Grant

“We sincerely thank the Kellogg Foundation for generously supporting the Ochsner-Xavier Institute for Health Equity and Research,” said Reynold Verret, President of Xavier University of Louisiana. “The work being completed by our collaborative efforts is of the utmost importance to eliminating barriers to healthcare, investing in the next generation of ‘health care heroes,’ understanding health disparities, and advancing equity.”

Learn More ➔
Zero Gap Pledge

Ochsner Health joined the Zero Health Gaps Pledge in April 2023. The Zero Health Gaps Pledge is part of the Global Health Equity Network (GHEN), which brings together key stakeholders from public and private sectors to advance a collective vision of Zero Health Gaps within the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

“At Ochsner, we serve, heal, lead, educate and innovate to inspire healthier lives and stronger communities,” said Corwin Harper, Chief Executive Officer, Ochsner LSU Health. “We agree that there is a need for greater affordability, accessibility and equity to advance health outcomes, which is why we are the first healthcare organization in the Southeast United States to sign the Global Health Equity Network’s Zero Health Gaps Pledge.”
Our Strategic Priorities

01 Outcomes Research
02 Population Health Management
03 Health Careers & Equity Education
04 Community Engagement
05 Health Advocacy & Policy
01
Outcomes
Research

Goal: Build capacity for identifying health disparities and strategies to improve health equity.

Initiatives
• Advance health equity, outcomes, and community-based research
• Promote inclusion of racial/ethnic minority populations in clinical research
• Develop Ochsner-XULA cross-institutional research collaborations

Action Plans
• Increase participation of racial/ethnic minorities in clinical trials
• Increase community education around the interconnected disciplines of Medicine, Public Health and research
• Facilitate community engagement in clinical research
• Promote collaborations between Ochsner clinician researchers and XULA faculty
• Increase collaborations between OXIHER and The Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education
PROPEL IT Study Outcomes Research

PROPEL IT represents a pioneering research endeavor aimed at assessing the efficacy of a virtual weight loss program, administered by Ochsner’s Digital Medicine health coaches, in supporting Black or African American adults diagnosed with prediabetes or Type 2 diabetes. This collaborative effort between Ochsner and Pennington Biomedical Research Center (PBRC), facilitated by the University of Alabama’s Deep South Center to Reduce Disparities in Chronic Diseases, showcases our commitment to tackling health disparities prevalent in the Deep South region of the United States.

This clinical trial is led by esteemed Principal Investigators Peter Katzmarzyk, PhD, of PBRC, and Eboni Price-Haywood, MD, from Ochsner Health. PROPEL IT’s dedicated team of clinical research coordinators (Jewel Harden-Barrios, Marie Grant, William Armstrong and Kaela Battles-Raby) successfully recruited 352 African American patients into the study.

Notably, this study involves collaboration with 250 primary care providers within Ochsner, highlighting our comprehensive approach to community engagement and healthcare integration.

Located within the Ochsner Primary Care Research Network, our study aligns with the mission of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), further underscoring our commitment to evidence-based practice and patient-centered care. By leveraging digital health solutions and fostering interdisciplinary partnerships, PROPEL IT represents a strategic leap forward in advancing health equity and combating chronic diseases in underserved populations.

PEOPLE’S STORY

Success Measures

- 36% of newly enrolled patients in clinical trials represent racial/ethnic minority groups
- 4 community outreach events with research education annually
- Number of Ochsner-XULA co-authored academic products annually
  - 4 abstracts accepted to scientific conferences
  - 2 peer-reviewed manuscripts accepted for publication
  - 1–2 health disparities/equity research grants

Noteworthy achievements, awards and major legislative wins (2021–2023)

- $70K pilot grants awarded to XULA faculty
- XULA student awarded $2,500 for best research poster presentation at Eli Lilly’s HBCU day 2023
- Minority recruitment into clinical trials at Ochsner Health – 36%
- PROPEL IT study enrolled 352 Black patients in weight management study

Learn More ➤
Notably, this study involves collaboration with 250 primary care providers within Ochsner, highlighting our comprehensive approach to community engagement and healthcare integration.
Goal: Develop innovative solutions to improve overall community health.

Initiatives
- Design a comprehensive health system equity strategy
- Leverage digital health technology to expand access
- Engage stakeholders for quality improvement alignment with Healthy State priority areas

Action Plans
- Conduct health equity strategy consultations with Ochsner Health system leaders in the areas of (1) Data Analytics, (2) Quality/Safety/Population Health, (3) Value-Based Care, and (4) Health Policy
- Execute a 3-phase health equity strategy to drive insights into population health management programs for marginalized populations served by Ochsner Health
  - Improve data capture, validation and accuracy
  - Utilize healthcare quality performance dashboards and related analytics
  - Implement data-informed healthcare delivery models
- Increase participation of medically underserved populations in digital health solutions for timely health prevention and chronic disease management

Success Measures
- Demographic data capture rate of <5% unknown or missing data for race/ethnicity, preferred language, sex, gender identity, and disability among patients seen within Ochsner Health
- Number of system-level health equity initiatives in Quality/Safety/Population Health/Value-Based Care
- Digital solutions: 1,500 Medicaid patients newly enrolled in Digital Medicine programs each year

Noteworthy achievements, awards and major legislative wins (2021–2023)
- 8 XULA MPH students completed public health internships
- 93% Ochsner employees completed Health Equity training as part of the health system’s 2023 mandatory annual regulatory training
- Launched Ochsner’s health equity dashboard that includes measures for ambulatory care, inpatient service, patient experience, and access to care that can be examined by sociodemographic groups
- Digital Medicine hypertension program reduced racial disparities in blood pressure control among Medicaid-insured patients from a high of 16% down to 1% after 18 months of follow-up
Charles Marlin, aspiring to be a cardiologist, is an education program coordinator at Ochsner Health. In his role, Marlin collaborates with schools statewide, educating students about the dangers of vaping. This position followed his completion of an internship with OXIHER, aimed at offering students real-world experience. Inspired by his stepfather’s experience with complications from diabetes leading to a partial foot amputation, Marlin embarked on a healthcare career path. He attributes his success to his family’s unwavering support and the mentorship received from the medical community.

“I chose that route because I knew we needed more Black doctors and more Black cardiologists,” Marlin explained, having graduated from Xavier University of Louisiana, a historically Black college that boasts the highest number of African American pre-med students in the U.S.

“When it comes down to public health, a lot of the issues that we have, at least when it comes to the African American community, it comes down to building a trust with that community. And I feel like when you start to see [healthcare professionals] that look like you, that builds that trust.”

Learn More
Goal: Recruit, educate and retain a diverse workforce, and train healthcare workers to lead and innovate in health equity.

Initiatives
• Diversification of students enrolled in health professional training programs
• Develop new science degrees and health professional training programs
• Deliver healthcare provider training in social determinants of health
• Host college students in paid internships in research, public health, and healthcare administration within the health system

Success Measures
Year-over year trends in:
• Number of XULA students enrolled in each new degree or training programs annually*
• Percent diversity of Ochsner nurse scholars annually*
• Percent diversity of CHWs in community college partnered training program annually*
• Percent diversity of healthcare administration internship annually*
• Number of research interns from under-represented groups hosted at Ochsner annually
• Number of XULA Master of Public Health student interns hosted at Ochsner annually

Action Plans
• Create 3 new science degree or professional training programs at XULA
  • Master of Health Informatics
  • Master of Art in Ethics of Science & Technology
  • Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine
• Increase diversity of scholars in nursing and community health worker (CHW) training programs
• Increase diversity of healthcare administration internship program at Ochsner
• Recruit underrepresented students in the field of science for paid internships in clinical research, quality, safety, population health and healthcare management

Noteworthy achievements, awards and major legislative wins (2021–2023)
• XULA Master of Science in Health Informatics degree program launched with 6 students
• 9 out of 11 graduating research interns placed into full-time positions at Ochsner Research department
• Ochsner Health diversity of nurse scholars 66%, CHW trainees 93%
• HBCU Health Career Summit at Southern University – 330 attendees

* Program size varies year to year.
Missy Hopson, PhD, Vice President of Talent Management and Workforce Development, Ochsner Health

The Ochsner Nurse Scholars program is designed to support students from Louisiana, Mississippi and the University of West Alabama pursuing nursing degrees. Eligible students receive financial aid for tuition in exchange for service at Ochsner Health. Participants benefit from comprehensive support, including mentorship and career guidance. Upon completion, Ochsner Nurse Scholars begin their nursing career at Ochsner Health, contributing to our legacy of patient care excellence.

Since announcing a $30 million commitment to grow the nursing, physician, and allied health pipeline through our Ochsner Scholars program, we’ve accepted 614 Nurse Scholars, with 92 students starting the program in 2024. Through Ochsner Nurse Scholars, Ochsner offers tuition assistance to aspiring nurses in exchange for service at Ochsner. Today, 90 Nurse Scholars are now Ochsner employees.

Learn More
Goal: Build partnerships for public health solutions tailored to local communities.

Initiatives

• Collaborate with community organizations in historically under-resourced neighborhoods
• Align regional projects with community health needs assessment

Action Plans

• Develop longitudinal partnerships in alignment with the community health needs assessment
• Conduct community outreach events within underserved communities in catchment area of Ochsner Community Health Centers
• Develop community projects in alignment with one of the Healthy State priority areas (food insecurity, obesity, cancer prevention, chronic conditions, workforce development and education, broadband expansion)

Success Measures

• 3 longitudinal partnerships with high-impact organizations that serve marginalized populations (e.g., religious, government or community-based)
• 3 community-partnered outreach events annually that each serve 100+ attendees
• 2 community-based projects focused on digital health and/or health literacy
Noteworthy achievements, awards and major legislative wins (2021–2023)

• Over 34,000 community members reached through 100+ outreach events
• Giving Thanks Health Fest focused on cancer awareness and health promotion in partnership with Franklin Avenue Baptist Church and Genentech
  • 132 on-site attendees
  • 60 cancer education interactions
  • 40 health education on genetic screening
  • 34 BMI, blood pressure, lipid panel or glucose screenings
  • 26 trainings on Hands-Only CPR
  • 4 cancer survivor panel discussions
  • 206 livestream views
  • 462 post-event YouTube views

• Two Black Men’s Health Events in Orleans and Jefferson Parish in partnership with Janssen Oncology, Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club, Orleans Parish Sherriff’s Office, Light City Cathedral Baptist Church, and St. Joseph Missionary Baptist Church
  • 153 community member attendees
  • 53 prostate specific antigen (PSA) screenings
  • 67 blood pressures, glucose and cholesterol screenings
  • 18 lung capacity screenings
  • 14 blood donations
  • 5 educational panel discussions
• Newly renovated XULA Center for Health & Wellness re-opened January 2024 and new site in Lower 9th Ward to open soon
05 Health Advocacy & Policy

**Goal:** Advocate for policies impacting community health.

**Initiatives**
- Advocate for legislative activity alignment with Healthy State priority areas
- Promote health equity via outreach, education and public speaking engagements
- Disseminate evidence-informed health equity solutions

**Action Plans**
- Focus health advocacy on major drivers of Louisiana’s low health ranking
  - Maternal health, tobacco cessation, cancer prevention, chronic disease, obesity
  - Social determinants of health (food insecurity, broadband/digital technology access, economic development and/or job opportunities)
- Conduct at least 5 outreach and education events annually
- Advocate for at least 5 state legislative bills annually
- Publish at least 1–2 scholarly articles annually

**Success Measures**
- Number of Louisiana legislative bills (on priority topic areas) passed/failed
- Number of events by type
  - Public speaking
  - Government testimony
  - Media
- Number of publications by type
  - Opposite editorial (op-ed)
  - Policy brief
  - Peer-reviewed journal

**Noteworthy achievements, awards and major legislative wins (2021–2023)**
- Legislative wins: $3M for planning for Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine
- ConnectLA releases Digital Equity Plan and 5-Year Action Plan to reduce digital divide
- 35 colleges and universities received the Hunger-Free Campus designation to alleviate the burdens of students who experience food insecurity
- Louisiana mandated comprehensive smoking cessation coverage across private and public insurance
Dr. Gillispie-Bell, a beacon of hope for maternal health in Louisiana, has demonstrated unwavering commitment to improving outcomes in the face of stark disparities. Through her leadership, the Louisiana Perinatal Quality Collaborative achieved a remarkable 39% decrease in severe maternal morbidity, with an astonishing 58% decrease among Black women. Dr. Gillispie-Bell serves in an executive advisor role for a $16.5 million NIH grant aimed at addressing root causes of maternal health disparities. This grant will establish the Southern Center for Maternal Health Equity, a research center dedicated to reducing pregnancy complications and deaths while promoting maternal health equity in the Gulf South. Dr. Gillispie-Bell's tireless advocacy and dedication to maternal health have left an indelible mark, not only in statistics but in the countless lives she has touched. Her legacy resonates through her transformative work, forever changing the landscape of maternal care in Louisiana and beyond.
OXIHER uses targeted outreach and multiple channels of communication to share research and initiatives intended to highlight and address systemic barriers to health equity. We also promote access to healthcare resources and foster dialogue with the goal of achieving improved health outcomes for all.

Key Messages

OXIHER recognizes that global health is local health. We use the World Health Organization definition of health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. OXIHER acknowledges that the structural drivers of poor health outcomes are universal, and globalization has made all populations susceptible to disease—particularly the socioeconomically disadvantaged and marginalized. OXIHER is therefore committed to focusing on health equity to ensure the optimal health and well-being of all our communities.

OXIHER serves as a leading catalyst and driver for health equity initiatives including Healthy State. We leverage community engagement, outcomes research, population health strategies, workforce development and educational initiatives as well as health advocacy to investigate and create solutions for the challenges faced today.

OXIHER also actively engages with the community to provide educational and workforce development opportunities. This includes partnerships with community colleges to offer upskilling programs to healthcare workers. These initiatives allow locals to thrive in high-wage careers while addressing critical healthcare workforce needs in equitable and inclusive ways and building the next generation of leaders.

We also want to ensure that we create programs to keep talented healthcare workers in Louisiana. This is important as we address health equity and helps develop care teams that more deeply and authentically understand the cultures and backgrounds of those they serve. To truly address the social determinants of health and build trust between patients and those who care for them, we must ensure that our workforce displays cultural humility, awareness and understanding.

Health advocacy and policy are equally important tools in our effort to advance health equity in Louisiana. Effective policies can address systemic barriers, promote equitable distribution of resources, and ensure that marginalized communities receive necessary support and services to improve their health outcomes.
Key Audiences & Stakeholders

- Xavier University of Louisiana students and staff
- Ochsner Health physicians, care teams and staff
- Patients and families
- Community partners including nonprofits, faith-based organizations and other community-based organizations
- Traditional media including print, radio, television, as well as online platforms and social media influencers
- Community leaders and influencers
- Research and educational institutions, including K-12 schools, colleges and universities
- Government agencies (local, state and federal) and regulatory bodies
- Public health departments and social service agencies
- Community health centers
- Advocacy and support groups
- Philanthropic foundations
- Industry partners, local businesses, chambers of commerce and other professional organizations
- Suppliers, vendors and contractors

Methods

- Engage community leaders, influencers and grassroots organizations to amplify messaging, build trust and facilitate two-way communication channels
- Use social media, traditional media, and digital and other platforms to reach diverse audiences and reinforce key health messages
- Partner with local community organizations, government agencies and other stakeholders to leverage resources, share expertise, streamline messaging and coordinate efforts
- Conduct targeted outreach efforts to underserved populations through community events and other methods to ensure equitable access to health information and services
Conclusion

As we reflect on the journey of OXIHER and its commitment to transforming healthcare in Louisiana, we find ourselves at a critical juncture filled with hope for the future. Despite the long-standing health disparities that have plagued our state, Ochsner Health and Xavier University of Louisiana have united under the banner of equity to pave the way for a brighter tomorrow.

Through OXIHER, we have witnessed the power of collaboration and innovation in addressing the root causes of health inequities. From groundbreaking research initiatives to community outreach efforts, every step forward brings us closer to our shared vision of a healthier, more equitable Louisiana.

As we continue to champion health equity and advocate for policies that impact community well-being, we do so with unwavering optimism and determination. The strides we have made—and those yet to come—remind us that change is not only possible but inevitable when we stand together in pursuit of a common goal.

So, who are we? We are a coalition of changemakers, driven by a shared commitment to improving the lives of all Louisianans. And as we look to the future, we do so with hope in our hearts, knowing that the work we do today will shape the health landscape of tomorrow for generations to come.

Sources:

Ochsner-Xavier Institute for Health Equity and Research (OXIHER) | Ochsner Health
W.K. Kellogg Foundation Awards $2.4 Million Grant to Ochsner Xavier Institute for Health Equity and Research | Ochsner Health
Ochsner Health Pledges Zero Health Gaps for World Health Day | Ochsner Health
Action Plans & Success Measures from OXIHER CHIP Work Plan
$16.5M NIH Grant Awarded to Address Maternal Mortality Rate in Louisiana (ochsner.org)
HBCU and Health Care System Partner to Deepen Health Equities and Community Wellness | Every Child Thrives
OXIHER Team

Eboni Price-Haywood, MD, MPH, MMM, FACP
OXIHER Medical Director, Ochsner Health

Nicholas Duesbery, PhD
Outcomes Research, Ochsner Health

Beau Raymond, MD, MMM, FACP
Population Health, Ochsner Health

Deborah Grimes, RN, JD, MSHQS
Health Careers & Equity Education, Ochsner Health

Florastina Payton-Stewart, PhD
Health Careers & Equity Education
Xavier University of Louisiana

Tonia Moore, MA, MSHCM
Community Engagement, Ochsner Health

William Kirchain, PharmD, CDCES
Community Engagement, Xavier University of Louisiana

Veronica Gillispie-Bell, MD, MAS, FACOG
Advocacy & Health Policy, Ochsner Health

Victoria Smith, MD, FAAFP
Associate Medical Director for Primary Care-River Region;
Ambulatory Quality Leader, Ochsner Health

Bianca Cook
Director of Community Health & Health Equity
Strategic Initiatives, Ochsner Health

Steven Crimaldi
Strategic Program Manager, Ochsner Health

Nariman Ammar, PhD
Health Informatics Researcher, Ochsner Health

Susan Olet, PhD
Health Informatics Researcher, Ochsner Health

Jewel Harden-Barrios, MEd
Senior Clinical Research Coordinator, Ochsner Health

Christopher Williams, PhD
OXIHER Director, Xavier University of Louisiana

Chamika Hawkins-Taylor, MHA, PhD
Outcomes Research, Xavier University of Louisiana

Nicolette Villemarette-Pittman, PhD
Outcomes Research, Ochsner Health

Amy Thierry, PhD, MPH
Population Health, Xavier University of Louisiana

Missy Hopson, PhD
Health Careers & Equity Education, Ochsner Health

Yvens Laborde, MD
Community Engagement, Ochsner Health

Margarita Echeverri, MSc, PhD
Community Engagement
Xavier University of Louisiana

Catherine Levendis, JD
Advocacy & Health Policy, Ochsner Health

Nia Mason, PhD
Advocacy & Health Policy
Xavier University of Louisiana

Elizabeth Grush
Assistant Vice President, Healthy State
Ochsner Health

Ariyon C. Bryant, DrPH, MPH
Strategic Program Manager, Ochsner Health

Nicole Summers
Program Manager, Xavier University of Louisiana

Elizabeth Howard, PhD, MSPH
Senior Epidemiologist, Ochsner Health