

# THE COLUMBUS-ATHENS SCHWEITZER FELLOWS PROGRAM

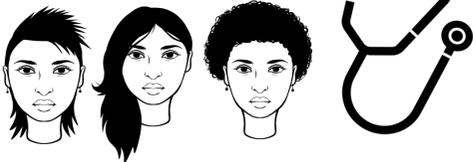
Purpose: To facilitate service projects to benefit the Columbus and Athens communities, and simultaneously develop emerging professionals who have the skills to address unmet health-related needs throughout their careers.

THE ALBERT  
SCHWEITZER  
FELLOWSHIP<sup>®</sup>  
*Addressing Health Disparities  
by Developing Leaders in Service*

“Start early to instill in your students awareness that they are on this earth to help and serve others; that is as important to pass on to them as knowledge.”

—Albert Schweitzer, PhD, MD

WOMEN ASK.  
WOMEN ANSWER.



## EMPOWERING WOMEN IN PRISONS THROUGH HEALTH EDUCATION

### Background

- There are currently 4,000 women incarcerated in Ohio.
- Forty-one percent of women who enter prison do so with less than a GED level of education<sup>1</sup>.
- Studies have shown that, for populations in and out of prison, increased education levels are negatively correlated with chronic health issues<sup>1</sup>.
- These reasons were the motivation for this initiative: a women's health education course at the Ohio Reformatory for Women, in Marysville, Ohio, the largest women's prison in Ohio and home to over 2,300 women.

### Initiative

- Over the course of seven months, three health classes were held at an Ohio women's prison, consisting of 15-20 students per class.
- Subjects covered a broad overview of *women's and mental health topics including women's reproductive anatomy, pregnancy, mensuration, LGBTQ+ identities, contraception, and STDs, bipolar disorder, depression, anger management, and mindfulness and meditation*

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### Outcomes

- Each student left the class with a certificate of completion to acknowledge their accomplishments, which at least one inmate successfully used an example of model behavior to reduce time from her sentence.
- Post-class surveys demonstrated positive feedback from students.

### Moving Forward

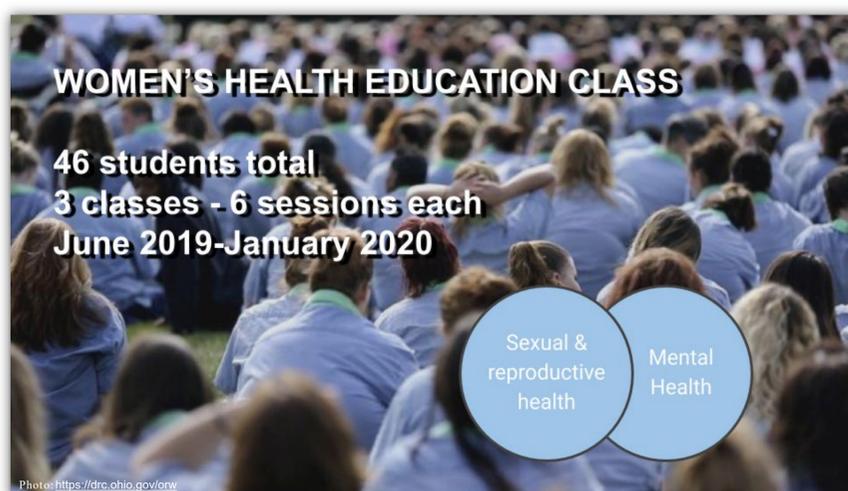
- Due to the growing number of LGBTQ+ identifying people at ORW, medical directors at the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction requested continuation of this program with an emphasis on health topics specific to this population.
- The aim is to continue providing health education classes for incarcerated women, adapting the course content as the educational needs of the population evolve.

“THIS CLASS  
MAKES ME FEEL  
NORMAL

“THIS IS  
WELLNESS

### Reflection

- At the start of this project, neither of us had ever worked in a prison setting. It was a rewarding experience to develop trusting relationships with hard-working, passionate students over the course of weeks.
- The more we interacted with the women and learned about their experiences, the more motivated we were to offer as much clinical insight we could during our time at ORW.
- To learn about the healthcare they were receiving while at the prison was both eye-opening and humbling, as we were forced to acknowledge our own privilege as future healthcare professionals.
- Students often challenged our understanding of clinical concepts, which pushed us to do our own research and pass on our findings to the students.
- This experience allowed us to hear health concerns that our future patients could potentially have. Our time spent with these women of various backgrounds and experiences will make us more empathic and open-minded physicians.



  
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#### References

<sup>1</sup>Nowotny KM, Masters RK, Boardman JD. The relationship between education and health among incarcerated men and women in the United States. *JAMA Public Health* 2016;16(1):916. Published 2016 Sep 1. doi:10.1186/s12889-016-3555

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