



Michigan State University

# COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

*Summary of "Creating COMMunity: A Shared Process to Build a Better MSUCOM"*

## INTRODUCTION

The Prevention, Outreach and Education Department (POE) Climate and Response Specialist worked with the Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) with the goal of moving toward a space of healing following the years of investigation and subsequent proceedings involving sexual misconduct within the college. This critical juncture unearthed a structural issue that influenced the function and culture of the college. The intention behind the "Creating COMMunity: A Shared Process to Build a Better MSUCOM" was to (re)define the culture and structures within the college in order to continue nurturing the health of the College of Osteopathic Medicine.

By centering the imagined future of the college, the trajectory was focused on a posture of growth. Previous climate assessment processes conducted by external entities were taken into consideration during the development of the Climate and Response process, which allowed for robust dialogues about future positioning of the college. All participation in the process was voluntary.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MSU College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) faculty, staff, administrators\* and student leaders participated in "Creating COMMunity: A Shared Process to Build a Better MSUCOM" at all three sites: East Lansing, Macomb, and Detroit Medical Center from July 2019–October 2019. A total of 91 faculty, staff and administrators and 30 student leaders participated in the in-person process. 24 additional faculty/staff/administrator individuals and one additional student leader participated in the process via the summary review survey distributed at the completion of the in-person sessions. The in-person sessions were designed around the guiding question, "What do we want our culture to be in COM and how do we uphold that culture?" Sessions were facilitated discussions that led participants to answer this question in order to generate a sense of the qualities that they deemed as important for the culture within COM.

The traits that were identified do not necessarily indicate that these elements are currently lacking within the environment - the discussions were future-focused, meaning that participants may have been including the traits that currently exist and would like to have continue. These distinctions were not made during the facilitated process.

## OVERVIEW



STEP 1:  
Creating COMMunity:  
A Shared Process to  
Build a Better  
MSUCOM



STEP 2:  
Community Voices:  
Connecting  
Expectations



STEP 3:  
Skill Building



STEP 4:  
Review and Moving  
Forward



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

Overall, the culture traits and characteristics that were identified at all sites and among all populations of staff, faculty and administrators were: inclusion, openness, transparency, communication, respect and support. Although the percentage of the total college faculty, staff and administrator participation was around 15.2% for the in-person sessions, and 19.2% of the total when including the summary survey responses, these results can serve as a guide for college leaders during strategic planning and identifying values within the college culture.

\*“Administrators” is used to indicate COM dean, associate deans, chairs, directors, and executive management.

## PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

Prior to implementing the proposal, the Climate & Response Specialist met with relevant leaders and student organizations within COM, for example, the “Dean's Executive Board” and student leaders of student government bodies. This provided an opportunity to receive important feedback regarding the proposal prior to implementation. The Climate & Response Specialist also reviewed previously conducted climate assessments of MSU COM in order to avoid duplicating efforts that had already been completed.

## INCORPORATING THE OSTEOPATHIC MODEL



The above graphic is used to depict the Osteopathic model of the interrelated nature of mind, body and spirit to demonstrate that this culture change process requires similar considerations for success. Each element is indicated throughout the summary.





## STEP 1 SUMMARY:

# Creating COMmunity: A Shared Process to Build a Better MSUCOM

The "Creating COMmunity: A Shared Process to Build a Better MSUCOM" sessions were held throughout the college. Sessions were held with COM administrators, faculty and staff at the Macomb site, separate sessions for faculty and staff at the Detroit Medical Center site, separate sessions for East Lansing site faculty and East Lansing staff, and one session was held with medical student leaders from all three sites.

During these sessions, participants were guided through a process for answering the question, "What do we want our culture to be in COM and how do we uphold that culture?" The goal of these sessions was to identify the direction and values of those within the college in order to inform the strategic planning by the college's leadership.

## Administrators, Faculty and Staff Summary

### Pre-Work Survey

In order to situate the "Creating COMmunity" process in already existing research around work team success, Dr. Amy Edmondson's model of Psychological Safety was used to gauge the level of psychological safety felt by the leadership team and faculty and staff within COM. Edmondson's (1999) research reveals that, "Team psychological safety involves but goes beyond interpersonal trust; it describes a team climate characterized by interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves." Psychological safety is necessary for full participation and engagement. "For team psychological safety to be a group-level construct, it must characterize the team rather than individual members of the team, and team members must hold similar perceptions of it" (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354-355). In the electronic pre-work survey, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the indicators of psychological safety. This survey was intended to offer a simple snapshot for the facilitator and participants of the current feelings of psychological safety within COM. A separate survey was distributed to administrators from the one that was distributed to faculty and staff – all questions were the same. Medical students did not participate in the pre-work survey. Overall, responses ranged widely, indicating that there is not consistent agreement about the psychological safety within the college among those that participated in the survey. This survey could be redistributed to the college in six months to one year in order to determine if there has been any change in these responses.

The additional question in the pre-work survey was "How would you describe the current climate within the College of Osteopathic Medicine? (Use 1-3 word descriptions)." Subjectively, words ranged widely from those that could connote a positive meaning to those that could connote a more negative meaning. This question was also used to provide a snapshot of the current climate within COM so as to have a general sense of the backdrop for the exercise of imagining the future culture within the college.

*Source: Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44(2), 350-383. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2666999>.*

### Summary of "Creating COMmunity" Exercise

Themes and findings from the exercise fell into 11 main categories across East Lansing, Macomb, and Detroit Medical Center faculty, staff and administrators:

- **Values:** Several of the concepts that were explored during the exercise were those that could be described as core values for the college. Aligning to values such as caring, unity, innovation, visionary, safety, respect, fairness/honesty, diversity/inclusion, empathy, transparency, accountability, authenticity, humility, good will and welcoming, among others were highlighted as important for continuing to move COM forward.
- **Community, Collaboration & Communication:** Building a sense of community across roles and sites was identified during all sessions; important to that goal are the need for collaboration and communication across the college and with the larger community that COM serves. Related to these concepts is also the need for support for and among faculty, staff, administrators and students.





- **Inspiration/Culture:** Fostering a culture that is one of inspiration, standing out in a positive, motivational and energetic way and through supportive systems will continue to lead COM to serving as a role model at the University and across the Osteopathic field.
- **Osteopathic Roots:** In order to continue upholding the desired culture in COM, Osteopathic principles were identified as an important factor. Honoring the mind, body, spirit connection and holistic healing will serve as touch points for continuing to move forward.
- **Academic Excellence/Innovation:** Ultimately, being in an academic, higher education context, the need for academic excellence and continued innovation are critical factors within the COM culture. By fostering creativity, respect for new ideas, open communication and professional courtesy the college will continue to bring excellence and innovation to the field and continue a legacy of intellectual productivity.
- **Listening/Valuing Opinions:** Genuinely listening and employing tools for capturing diverse opinions, can create opportunities for positive change and a culture where new and innovative ideas can flourish.
- **Diversity & Inclusion:** Diversity and inclusion were identified as values, and are also important culture traits in varying ways. These concepts are important in building a community of caring and safety for bringing one's full self and actively engaging in the college, honoring difference in perspective and opinion, raising awareness of unique needs across identities, respecting and being responsive to prioritizing inclusiveness. *NOTE: inclusion may mean demographic diversity and also inclusion in ability to participate – what is the climate that allows for and encourages equal participation; inclusion of professional diversity as well – different fields and skills all coming together toward a common goal.*
- **Representation & Opportunities:** Related to diversity and inclusion, this category focused on recruitment, retention and representation across the college - including on committees and ensuring that staff and students of diverse backgrounds in particular have a voice and equal access to opportunities.
- **Mentoring:** The importance of mentoring students came up explicitly among Detroit Medical Center faculty, but can easily be related to other concepts as well around supporting student success.
- **Mission Focused & Community Building:** The importance of having a strong and common mission/vision came up explicitly in the administrator session, but is also linked to several other categories. This category in particular emphasized the importance of creating a supportive community throughout the experience of faculty, staff, students and administrators and patients and community partners.
- **Strategic Vision:** This category was developed during the administrator session, but is also linked to other concepts. The category of strategic vision includes concepts of innovation, clear expectations, effective organizational structures, efficient decision-making, accountability, robust research, and nimble strategic change.

By identifying these traits that are important for building the desired culture within COM, the college has an opportunity to incorporate these concepts into strategic planning and other operationalizing opportunities - to be summarized below.

## Medical Student Summary

### Pre-Work

Prior to conducting the "Creating COMmunity" exercise with medical students, the Climate & Response Specialist hosted a focus group with medical student leaders in order to capture the unique considerations about the COM culture from the medical student perspective.

### Summary of "Creating COMmunity" Exercise

Medical student leader participants included presidents and vice presidents from the Student Government Association and Student Osteopathic Medical Association, and the Class of 2022 Executive Board. The summary of the medical student process are not entirely distinct from the faculty, staff and administrator responses, but this summary is kept separate in order to ensure that their unique perspective as professional students is maintained.

Themes and findings from the exercise fell into five main categories across East Lansing, Macomb, and Detroit Medical Center medical students:



## STEP 1 Continued...

- **Academic Excellence/Professionalism:** Clear expectations for professional behavior across all roles in the college. Access to high quality instruction and medical experiences in the classroom and hands-on opportunities in clinical settings. Support for students to achieve their goals throughout their experience as a medical student and prepare them for a career in the Osteopathic field.
- **Accountability/Transparency:** Expectations of accountability regardless of role in the college. Including students in decision-making for a diversity of perspectives and ensuring students are informed about changes occurring in the college.
- **Innovation/Adaptability:** Being open and adaptable to change and improvements in order to provide innovative education, facilities and experiences so that the college is "ahead of the curve". Value for student input to continue to adapt to the needs of today's students.
- **Collaboration/Team Environment:** Fostering a relational environment that is built on collaboration, growth, safety, respect, being humble, empathetic and open-minded.
- **Diversity & Inclusion:** Respecting and representative of all ideas and values within the college. A supportive environment that is inclusive and works toward equality.



## STEP 2:

### Community Voices: Connecting Expectations

Summary reports were compiled from each of the "Creating COMMunity: A Shared Process to Build a Better MSU COM" sessions. These summaries were shared back to the sites from which the content originated (East Lansing, Macomb and Detroit Medical Center). Faculty and staff were asked to review the summary and answer a short survey about their agreement or edits to the summary results. Medical student leaders were asked to do the same.

This survey was employed to determine the accuracy of the summary reports and also provide an opportunity for capturing additional voices in the process. The survey resulted in 25 additional new participants in the process.

The majority of respondents agreed with the results of the summary reports from the "Creating COMMunity" process. If there were unique ideas that were brought forth in the survey, they were incorporated into the final summary report.



## STEP 3:

### Skill Building

In accordance with curriculum changes for medical students as of the 2018-2019 academic year, the Prevention, Outreach and Education staff held in-person RVSM Policy and Mandatory Reporting training with first-year medical students. 100% of all satisfaction evaluations after the training session indicated "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to the level of comprehension around the learning objectives of the training.

Additional skill building for medical students, faculty, staff and administrators may be developed and facilitated as determined by the needs of the college after reviews of the "Creating COMMunity" process and implementation of the strategic plan. The Climate and Response Specialist will continue to work with the college in determining skill building needs.





## STEP 4:

### Review and Moving Forward

Culture change is not something that happens quickly. This work is constantly evolving and must happen over time in order to be sustained. It requires continued dedication to shift the climate and culture within the college. It is recommended that this document is continuously reviewed by college administrators and leaders. The progress and incorporation of these culture traits across the college should continued to be assessed over time.

As determined in the original proposal of this process, the identified values and culture traits have been incorporated into portions of the strategic plan for the college. Additionally, elements of the “Creating COMmunity” process have informed and been integrated into the Common Ground framework. As these elements continue to be operationalized and woven into the fabric of the college, the Prevention, Outreach and Education Department Climate and Response Specialist, will continue to provide guidance and support for these efforts.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Dean and Dean's Executive Board regularly review full summary report
- Continue to operationalize findings from this process
- Climate and Response Specialist work with the Dean, Dean's Executive Board, medical student leaders and other stakeholders to determine additional areas of assessment and/or skill building