



## **My One Health Leadership Experience**

*Submitted by*

*Liz Mack, Canadian Studies Center*

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Over the course of three days in Saskatoon, Canada, I had the opportunity to make international connections with fellow students, attend workshops, and connect with some of the nation's leading One Health experts. These opportunities came about through my participation in the University of Saskatchewan's (USASK) One Health Leadership Experience (OHLE) in August

2019. The invitation was extended through a partnership unique to Michigan State University's Canadian Studies Center and the College of Western Veterinary Medicine at USASK.

The concept of One Health is defined by the Center for Disease Control as "a collaborative, multisector, and transdisciplinary approach — working at the local, regional, national, and global levels — with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment". My experience at OHLE provided substantial information on One Health— I learned about a variety of topics including zoonotic diseases, how owning a pet helps homeless people, social determinants of health, and also valuable life advice from a past president of the Canadian Medical Association.

As a Social Relations and Policy major at James Madison College (JMC), a residential college that focuses on public affairs and writing, OHLE provided a unique educational and professional experience for me. I have taken JMC health-related courses taught by talented professors but these classes are not geared toward health students or taught by health professionals. Over the weekend, I was able to make connections and have conversations with people I could never imagine myself interacting with at MSU. Spending the weekend with health-minded students and professionals reinforced the value and necessity of a multidisciplinary approach to public health as well as the importance of keeping each other, including policy makers, informed of the best health practices.

Establishing the importance of multidisciplinary communication is of course important at the professional level but it is also crucial for teaching and learning at the university level. Going forward I hope to incorporate this multidisciplinary approach to public health on campus, starting with integrating JMC students into the existing MSU One Health student group.

Many JMC students like myself are interested in exploring topics such as the U.S. healthcare system, social determinants of health, bias in medicine, and other public health related issues. However, they may go their entire college career without interacting with any like-minded students in health-related majors. One Health collaboration on campus will bring students together, initiate important conversations, and allow for multidisciplinary learning experiences. One Health has the potential to create real positive change on campus as well as in the community.

Going forward I will also be working to integrate my newfound knowledge and connections into my academic pursuits. I will be reaching out to Dr. Lou Franchescutti, the past CMA president I mentioned above, to learn more about his current work establishing homeless ICUs in Canada. I am interested to learn more from another presenter, public health veterinarian Dr. Judy Hodge, who works with an organization that pairs homeless people with pets. While I have been interested in homelessness advocacy for a while, I have never before learned about how pets can be a positive social determinant of health for those experiencing homelessness because they instill a sense of responsibility and purpose. I will continue to reach out to those whom I met at OHLE to further establish connections that I can potentially utilize in my academic and professional career.

Overall, I believe attending OHLE was highly beneficial to my academic, professional, and personal goals. While I no-doubt learned a lot from the presentations I attended, I also made lasting connections with multiple University of Saskatchewan students, became good friends with my travel colleague Chima Maduka, a PhD candidate at MSU, improved my networking skills, and grew as a person and leader- yes, all during only 3 days! Additionally, apart from these beneficial opportunities provided by the University of Saskatchewan, I experienced the importance of going outside of my comfort zone —both personally and academically— and that something I will carry with me throughout my academic and professional career. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to attend OHLE and the experience would not have been possible without encouragement and support from the Canadian Studies Center and JMC.

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