

# The Clingman Center: Investing in the Art and Science of Community Engagement Design

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## INTRODUCTION

Ranking first nationally for graduating physicians practicing in rural areas, West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM) is dedicated to serving the unique health care needs of rural residents.

For academic medicine to play a role in reducing rural health disparities, genuine grassroots engagement and research are essential to find sustainable solutions to detrimental behaviors, inequalities, and biases that negatively impact health outcomes.

In 2015, WVSOM's Center for Rural and Community Health formed the Greenbrier County Health Alliance (GCHA), a non-profit organization to engage communities experiencing social isolation.

In 2019, WVSOM and GCHA launched development of the Clingman Center for Community Engagement as a community hub for engagement programming and research near WVSOM campus.

Collaborating with an expanding partner group, WVSOM has invested in the Clingman Center for Community Engagement and is establishing a complex service system to meet local priorities.

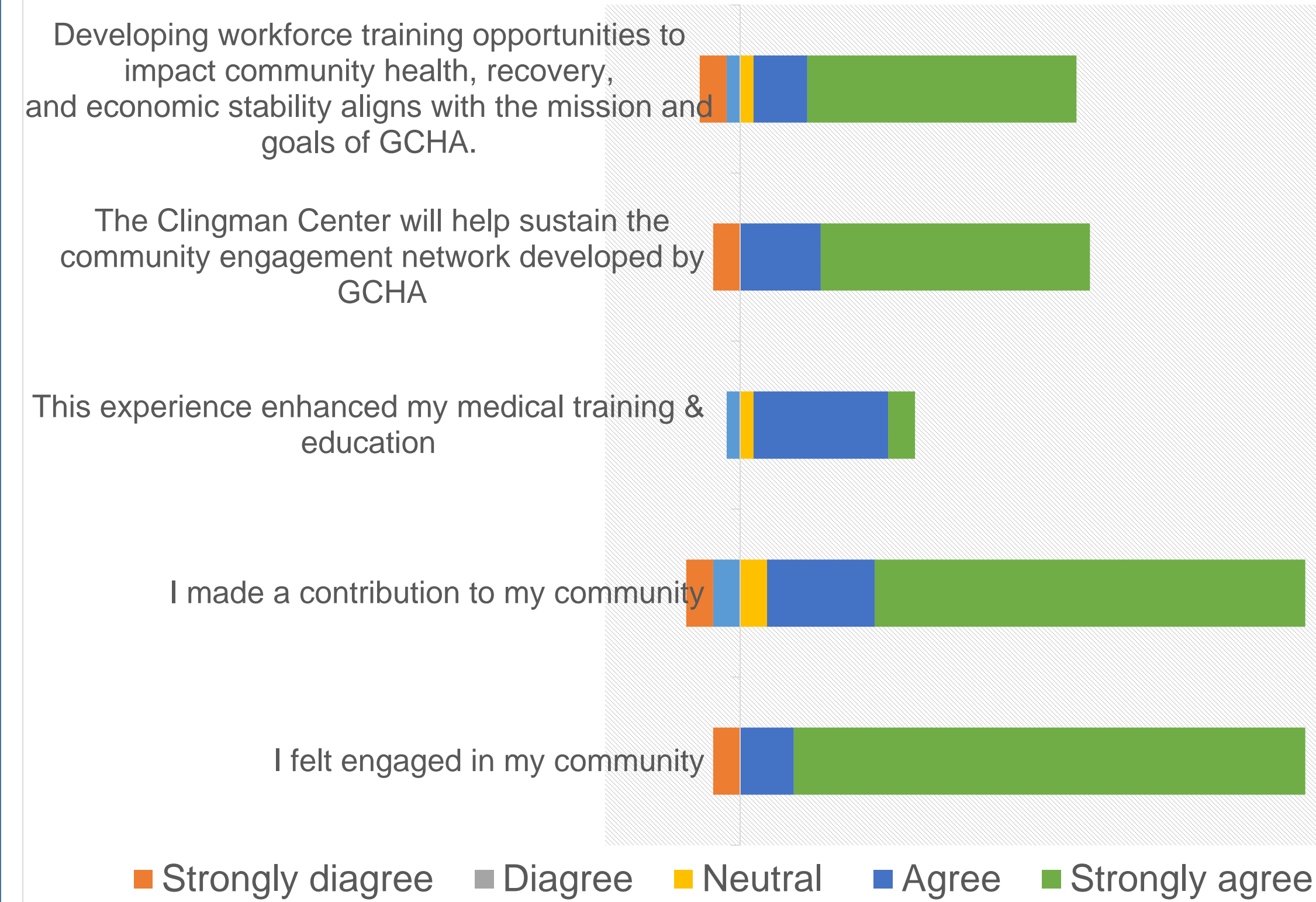


Clingman Center offers a teaching kitchen, demonstration gardens, food access markets, walking trails, and community-led initiatives.

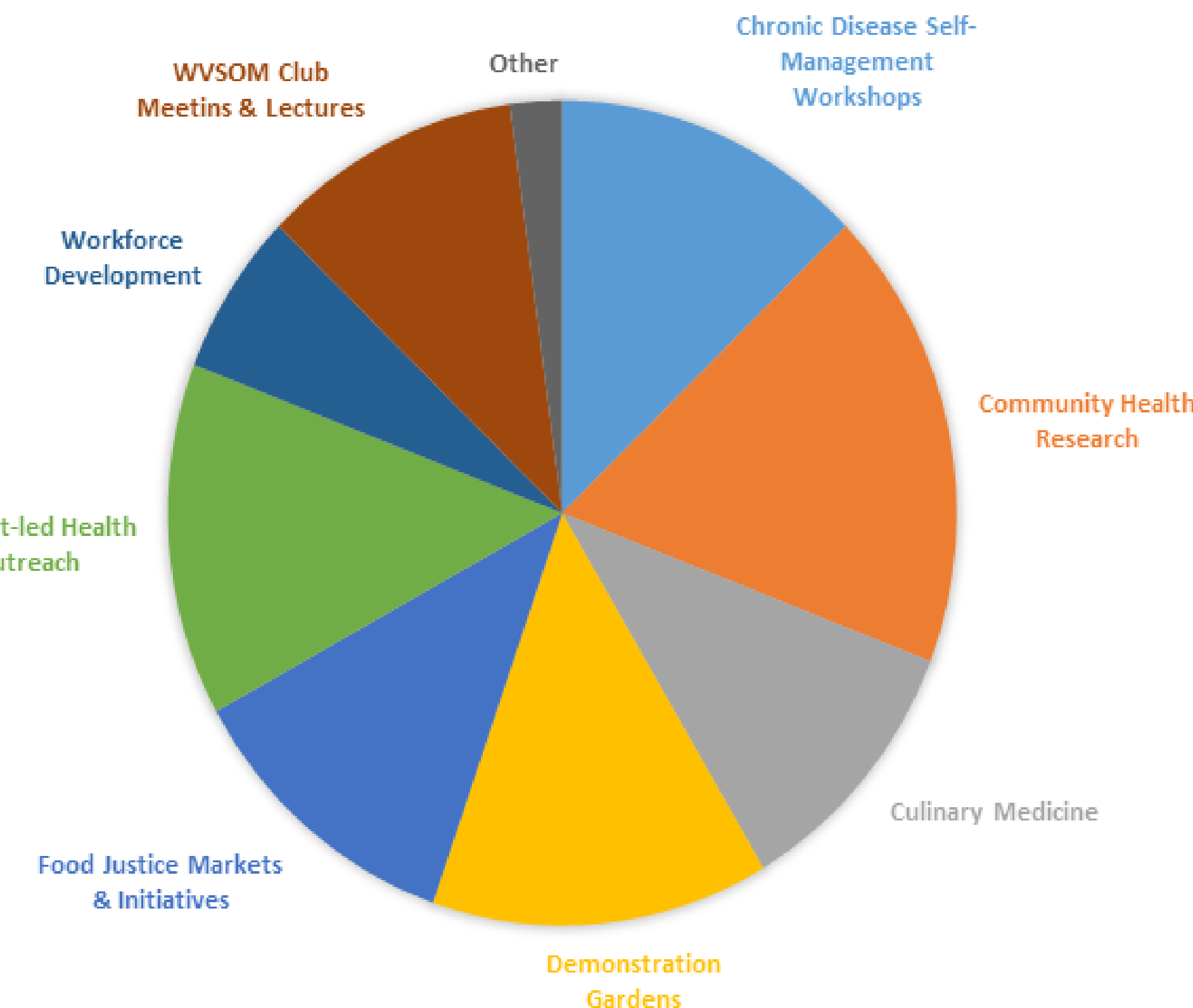
## METHODS/PROCESS

- Design experiential learning opportunities with WVSOM medical students, faculty, and partner communities that are responsive to grassroots health priorities and needs.
- Develop engagement programming and workforce training opportunities linked to community development to impact health, recovery, and economic stability.
- Enrich collaborative research opportunities through ongoing data collection and evaluation and development of community-driven research initiatives.
- Translate community expertise into research and research and learning into practice utilizing the Clingman Center to develop and pilot innovative solutions to real world, rural challenges.

### SURVEY RESPONSES



### CLINGMAN CENTER ACTIVITY INTERESTS



### Survey Comment from OMS II Student:

*I think the Greenbrier County Health Alliance at WVSOM has done a great job with trying to incorporate WVSOM students into the community with the demonstration gardens and the Pay What You Can market. It allows students to understand more about the community and get involved in the community.*

## COUNTY WIDE ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURE



GCHA works with isolated communities to cultivate and strengthen relationships by sharing resources and providing support to empower local leadership and mobilize healthy change.

WVSOM is on a mission to cultivate well educated, compassionate, and inspired osteopathic physicians.



WVSOM student engagement in community service and experiential learning enhances training, and reinforces future rural health orientation.

## RESULTS

- Partnerships across a county-wide network built on trust, respect, self-determination, inclusion, and multi-directional communication to inspire change
- Clingman Center for Community Engagement teaching kitchen, demonstration gardens, food access markets, walking trails, and community-led initiatives
- WVSOM student engagement in community service and experiences to enhance training and future rural health orientation
- Health and workforce training and resources for diverse stakeholder needs
- Capacity for research and scholarly activity with federal-wide assurance and WVSOM authorization, data collection, and trained personnel.

## DISCUSSION

Authentic collaboration among a medical school, local service providers, community members and partners can cultivate dynamic opportunities to enhance community health and quality of life and develop community-focused research.

Health outcomes and outlook pertaining to behavior change, psychosocial and emotional support, well-being, and self-efficacy improve when meaningful opportunities for cross-sector engagement are accessible and sustaining.

The Clingman Center increases capacity for WVSOM and partner communities to engage together equitably in research and scholarly activities addressing shared health priorities

## CONCLUSION

Better understanding of community-centered issues is critical for newly trained medical providers and researchers to positively impact health.

Community engagement is an ever-evolving collaboration of art and science. Robust program and research design require authentic integration of and flexibility to community aims. This process unfolds and evolves as new and diverse partners engage in shared health priorities to begin to clearly develop and define collaborative research and learning opportunities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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