University of Cincinnati students who are enrolled in Writing Across Media class have a unique opportunity to expand their journalistic skills beyond the usual classroom setting. Elissa Yancey, Educator Associate Professor of Journalism, who teaches this course said, “The service my students are providing is accurate, fair and comprehensive journalism.”

Students in this class are given the chance to report and explain the work being done by UC Open School at St. Vincent de Paul. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a neighborhood based service organization designed to care for those who are in need. There are more than 900 volunteers who help keep the its thrift stores, charitable pharmacies and food pantries open.

UC Open School is based off a model of health care professionals, in training, working across disciplines in a clinic setting.

This organization is an interprofessional educational community that offers students a setting in which to hone their skills and affect changes in the community.

Every Saturday morning students from the College of Medicine, the College of Nursing, the College of Pharmacy and the College of Allied Health Sciences volunteer to spend time conducting health screenings at the Banks Street location of St. Vincent de Paul. Among those screenings are blood pressure checks, blood sugar checks and weight and height measurements. Once a month dental hygiene students from UC Blue Ash come and provide oral health screenings and advise individuals where they can go to receive dental services.

People who come to the Edyth and Carl Linder Choice Food Pantry for food are also offered the opportunity to meet with student volunteers from UC Open School. The upstairs of the food pantry is set up for these screenings. There you will find a mix of the UC students, usually three or four to a room, from the multiple colleges talking about health habits, goal setting while performing health screenings. A faculty member is present at all times to sign off on all patients.

“The faculty members do it because the students are really into it,” Yancey said.

Yancey says the students in her Writing Across Media class go to the food bank on multiple Saturdays to talk to Open School participants, volunteers and professors about what they do and what the impact of their work is. Their focus is on not only what this does for the community but on how it benefits the students who are working across disciplines.

“It’s important for each professional to be aware and appreciate the benefits of other professionals’ work. It’s a real sense of holistic care,” Yancey said.

Yancey says the presence of the dental students from UC Blue Ash has been innovative because they have found bad oral health can lead to bad physical health.
This has become the focal point of the Writing Across Media course. Their stories will have a special focus on the dental clinic and the impact it is having on residents as well as on UC Open School.

UC Open School is not well known, so the purpose of this class is for students to write stories with photos and perform data analysis with data visualization.

A goal for the class is to map out and list all of the dental clinics in the general vicinity of the west end of Cincinnati. From there they hope to explain the cost in time and money for these residents to get to the clinics, especially those who must rely on public transportation.

Kyle Kauffung, a senior journalism major, is writing his story on a specific visitor to the clinic. Kauffung said the visitor has had a really great experience there and speaks very positively about the work the student volunteers do at the clinic. He said he is including comments from one of the student leaders of UC Open School to get perspective on what their goals are and how the clinic impacts them and their education. “Writing Across Media is a really important class for journalism students to take because it teaches skills that students can utilize across many different forms of media to effectively tell a story,” Kauffung said.

Yancey says the underlying objective of the partnership between UC Open School, St. Vincent de Paul and the Writing Across Media class is to build community, not only across campus but across the city by becoming immersed with people who we otherwise would not come into contact with.