



POVERTY SIMULATION EVENT
OCTOBER 6 and 7, 2017

FAQ

Is this simulation expected to teach students what it is *really* like to be poor?

No. This exercise does not fully reflect what it is like to live in poverty. However, it is designed to give participants specific realistic challenges associated with feeding your family, paying your bills, finding employment, and navigating many more challenges. The goal is to have students reflect and learn ways to take action, promote justice, and be an ally to those living in a real state of poverty.

This simulation is also not a standalone activity. It includes a significant debrief where both faculty and community organizations who work with low-income individuals every day will be present to discuss the activity and address questions and comments from participants. The event will also begin with a talk by Dr. Scott Allard, author of *Place and Poverty in the United States*.

Students will leave the event with ways to get involved both on campus and alongside the community. We will give them tools to translate their learning into action for poverty alleviation and social justice.

How can you ensure that this event will be respectful of those actually living in poverty?

Poverty Solutions is running this simulation in partnership with the Office of Metropolitan Impact at U-M Dearborn. They facilitate this exercise each semester, and report that their students find it meaningful. We have volunteers from the Community Action Network of Washtenaw County, The Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, Food Gatherers and the Ypsilanti Health Center.

We've also engaged students from groups on-campus to share their experiences on these issues. We're working closely with faculty on campus whose expertise lies in social justice and social welfare. We're working alongside U-M's Community-Engaged Academic Learning (CEAL) to make sure the debrief of the event is effective.

How was this simulation designed?

The simulation framework was developed by the [Missouri Community Action Network \(http://www.communityaction.org/povertysimulations/\)](http://www.communityaction.org/povertysimulations/), a community organization that has been working on issues of poverty and inequality deeply since 1975. They've carefully developed the [framework \(http://www.povertysimulation.net/about/\)](http://www.povertysimulation.net/about/) to ensure that it is reflective of the individuals that they serve.

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We are partnering with the UM-Dearborn Office of Metropolitan Impact, who have been trained on facilitating this particular kit. They have experience adjusting the simulation for different groups and addressing things that may come up. Finally, Poverty Solutions is deeply committed and engaged in poverty prevention and alleviation through action-based research, policy engagement, and community and student involvement.

See others experiences with this Poverty Simulation across the country [here](http://www.povertysimulation.net/news/) (<http://www.povertysimulation.net/news/>).

Why use a role play activity on this topic?

We view this as an opportunity for important dialogue, using a role-play activity that is meant to be taken seriously and not as a game. Role playing has been shown as an evidence based strategy to change attitudes and behaviors. This includes societal problems like [racism](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27541868) (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27541868>), [poverty](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1525-1446.2011.00999.x/full) (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1525-1446.2011.00999.x/full>), and [world hunger](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1528-3577.2006.00230.x/full) (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1528-3577.2006.00230.x/full>).

How are low-income voices represented?

First, the simulation was developed by the Missouri Community Action Network. They have deep community ties working with low-income individuals on a daily basis. According to the organization, they developed it for individuals to “Understand poverty through an experiential setting, empower low-income volunteers to interact with leaders from their community, view poverty as a reality.”

In addition, we have community organizations serving as the social service organizations who will interact with participants. Many of the organizations represented work with low-income individuals every day and will be using their experiences to help facilitate the debrief and discuss the experience with students.

Why focus on \$1,500 a month?

\$1,500 per month has been chosen because it roughly aligns with the [Federal Poverty Line](https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-FPL/) (<https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-FPL/>).

Who is the audience?

All U-M students are encouraged to participate in this event. Organizers will ensure this is safe space for anyone who would like to participate.

What else is U-M and Poverty Solutions doing around this issue?

The simulation is meant to be just one event in a larger ecosystem of efforts to address the challenges the University of Michigan and the United States face around poverty and inequality. For more information on Poverty Solutions visit poverty.umich.edu.