Regarding barriers the children face in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and obstacles to addressing childhood overweight, student participants recognized a challenge in the:

**Lack of positive role modeling…**

“It’s definitely hard for them. Their parents are doing it (eating and feeding the kids junk food) and then us as strangers come in and we’re like, ‘Oh, you’re actually not eating what you’re supposed to be eating and your parents are feeding you the wrong stuff. Here’s what you’re suppose to be eating, but you don’t like it? Well, it’s healthy, sorry. You should eat it.’ So it’s just really complicated because parents, I mean kids, are so impressionable…”

“I think maybe a lack of good role models to look up to that are having healthy habits… We showed them it was fun to do that (play goofy games), and maybe they aren’t getting a lot of that outside of school.”

**Cost of and access to healthier foods…**

“I guess I was aware that healthier foods are more expensive, I just never thought about the connection that processed foods are so cheap; especially for parents with reduced income or on welfare that have to get the cheap foods because they have to feed their kids. They would rather have their kids be full…”

“It’s a lack of decent grocery stores in walking distance.”

**Access to and opportunity for physical activity…**

“I didn’t realize so much how they didn’t have access to a place to exercise. I always just thought they didn’t want to and now I saw that some people just can’t. They don’t really have the options that others have, like parks or anything to go to.”

Students felt the class changed their general view of childhood overweight, particularly among children from low-income families.

“... the class reinforced everything we’ve talked about and everything that you are kind of aware of, but you see it first hand so you can see how it affects… I mean, everyone says ‘childhood obesity’, but to see children who are actually in that situation... it just gives you a face, it gives you a feeling, and it gives you more of a personal connection. I think that the classes just reinforce the main points that are so crucial to understand why this is an issue... and more of a reason to change it.”

“I think when I thought about overweight and obesity before, I kind of thought of it as something people... could avoid if they wanted to. When you see it in children and you see... you put a face to that, through all the readings and everything you thought about and come to really see how there’s this long line of factors that seem to be against these kids having healthy habits and healthy lifestyles. Just really understanding how this system is almost lined up against them and how it’s hard to naturally avoid that.”

Participants also discussed proactive solutions to issues faced by low income families that contribute to the growing problem of childhood overweight.

“I think that if a lot of the kid’s families did have WIC programs and food stamps and different things like that, maybe if the government could allow those to be used on more healthier foods and make them somehow more available to them... if the government could somehow subsidize that (American farmers and their crops) for people on food stamps and stuff; so they could have more of a chance to purchase the products and so they can have more of a choice when selecting cheaper goods…”

Some students felt UConn Café had increased their willingness to take risks and had improved their leadership skills inside and outside of the class.

“I know in my other work situations it has helped me rise to the occasion and not have something prepared and being calm and say I’m going to get my point across. I’m organized in my mind. I know what I need to do and how to do it in a clear, concise way. So I think that that has helped in other places too.”

“It kind of helped when I was doing a presentation for Allied Health 242... My whole group decides... to have me speak for the whole presentation... So I was like, ‘Well I’m comfortable talking in front of 80 people in our class (UConn Café)... I felt comfortable just winging it in front of the class... It helped me to be able to speak for my group…”

“When they’d (the kids) ask you questions about something... you had to actually explain it. It’s very different than when you took a test and you had a multiple choice answer and you can pick out the answer and you can get an A on the test but you may not be able to explain it...”

Student participants attributed increased cultural competence to first-hand experience in the multicultural community setting.

“I think that the first hand experience is really where the cultural competence comes from. I think being out there and being exposed to different cultures, and seeing, like you said, the different foods that they have or what they say or what they look like or where they come from or seeing their neighborhood; I think that’s the only way to get people to understand. Even explaining what we’re doing to my friends, they’ll say, ‘Well why would you even want to help?’ or ‘What’s their culture like?’ or ‘Why can’t they just do this?’ So it’s like, now you know, you have an understanding of saying ‘this is why... this is what their culture is.’ It’s not as simple as...it’s not maybe what we would do as a solution. The cultural competence I think comes from seeing what they are dealing with and seeing what they are working with and then, again, tailoring what they need and what their culture is.”

“It was good to be working with the kids and being able to find common ground... even the adults, or the parents or teachers that we would see...you would see them nodding approval of you or looking at our shirts and just being glad that we were there and we were involved. It meant a lot to me and it has given me more confidence to relate to other cultures or just being in a situation and not getting hard on myself.”

Participation in the class encouraged students to validate future plans and career choices.

“I had never thought about community nutrition but after doing this I like it. I’d really like to make a difference and I think that focusing on the parents would do that.”

“...having the experience just makes me kind of want to look at maybe internships that do focus a little more on community nutrition...”

“I think that in the future, I just think I’ll be probably volunteering more.”

“This class has kind of shown me that it can be done and, you know, as long as you aren’t intimidated by the situation I think that it can be positive. I think that this same lesson plan or this same idea can be carried through in so many different places. Not only in school systems but also in the work force and I just think that it’s encouraging.”