

Incorporating Interprofessional Education into a Dietetics Curriculum

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Background

The growing complexity of health issues facing the health care system has led to the pursuit of more effective means of addressing the challenges faced by individuals and populations in managing their health care. (1) The current health care system has been found to be responsible for an unacceptable number of medical errors and poor health outcomes. (2) Evidence is beginning to mount in the direction of developing a health care work force skilled in interprofessional (IP) collaboration to address these troubling results. IP collaborative skills include engaging in effective teamwork and applying knowledge of scope of practice, values, and unique contribution of each health care profession. Programs in interprofessional education (IPE) are a means of developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for IP collaboration.

Process

Faculty from the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics evaluated course syllabi from the IPE program to determine which ACEND competencies could be met by these courses.

As a result:

- Six credit hours of general electives were filled with IPE credits
- Three credit hours of Ethics were replaced with IPE 420: Applied Decision Making in IP Practice
- One additional credit hour was added to the curriculum

Criteria for IPE Learning Experience at SLU

- Students and faculty represent a mix of multiple health professions
- Objectives content includes demonstrating a level of achievement related to IP competencies
- Course planned and taught by IP mix of faculty
- Assignments include IP team work
- Student evaluation includes an assessment of growth in IP competence

ACEND Competencies met by each IPE course

IPE 110: Introduction to Health Professions

- *KRD 2.1: The curriculum must include opportunities to develop a variety of communication skills sufficient for entry into pre-professional practice.*

IPE 350: Health Care System and Health Promotion

- *KRD 4.4: The curriculum must include content related to health care systems.*

IPE 420: Applied Decision Making in IP Practice

- *KRD 2.3: The curriculum must include opportunities to understand governance of dietetics practice, such as the Scope of Dietetics Practice and the Code of Ethics for the Profession of Dietetics; and interdisciplinary relationships in various practice settings.*

IPE 460: Evidence-Based Health Care

- *KRD 1.1: The curriculum must reflect the scientific basis of the dietetics profession and must include research methodology, interpretation of research literature and integration of research principles into evidence-based practice.*

IPE 490: Integrated IP Practicum Experience

- *KRD 3.3: The curriculum must include education and behavior change theories and techniques.*

Benefits

As reflected in alumni and DI director surveys, student outcomes improved by the incorporation of the IPE program include:

- Improved communication skills
- Increased knowledge of healthcare systems
- Development of judgments respectful of the inherent dignity and worth of individuals

Faculty participating in the IPE Program enjoy benefits including:

- Improved understanding of the profession among faculty, staff and students
- Opportunities to enhance teaching in different environments with support from University services
- Increased collegiality and interaction with faculty and students from other professions including opportunities for scholarly collaboration

Challenges

Challenges presented by the incorporation of the IPE program included:

- Course scheduling
- Students and faculty represent a mix of multiple health professions
- Incorporating IPE concepts into clinical practicum and study abroad experiences

Implications

Dietetics educators should respond to the need to prepare students to work collaboratively in health care teams. Incorporating IPE coursework is challenging, yet beneficial for students and faculty.



Students in IPE 490 presenting a poster session to the SLU community