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InterProfessional Education Collaborative (IPEC), The University of New England

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▲ InterProfessional Education Collaborative (IPEC), The University of New England

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND (UNE) includes more than a dozen health or health related programs within its colleges of Health Professions, Osteopathic Medicine, Pharmacy, Arts and Sciences, School of Public Health, and a soon to be founded College of Dental Medicine. For more than a decade, the Westbrook College of Health Professions (WCHP) has integrated interprofessional education into its programs. Early successes included extra-curricular programming such as seminars, symposia, a film series, research and scholarship days, interprofessional grand rounds, and cultural immersion experiences.

Growing interest in IPE across UNE has led to the founding of the InterProfessional Education Collaborative (IPEC), which was launched in May of 2010. The “collaborative” concept was promoted and developed by a working group made up of faculty, College administration, and staff, and the launch was accompanied by a significant increase in investment including the addition of faculty, administration, and staff whose primary function is to support and enhance IPE. IPEC is an intercollegiate initiative designed to support and enhance the education of practitioners, researchers, and scholars across the health professions.

The launch of IPEC has been accompanied by a series of interesting collaborations between the various colleges of the university along with key community organizational partners. These include the development of a common curriculum for our undergraduate health professions majors, an innovative interprofessional health mission in Ghana, a research project investigating the alliance between providers and patients in primary care, the application of theater for health and wellness education, an interprofessional community clinic, inviting staff from local hospitals and agencies to faculty development activities, exploring joint faculty/staff appointments with those same agencies, and an initiative to examine literature in health and the role of narrative in healing.

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PRIMARY GOALS FOR IPEC

- Innovate and implement interprofessional health education curriculum and programs.
- Establish interprofessional health research and scholarship, including community based participatory research focused on community needs.
- Establish collaborative clinical practice sites on or near campus and in conjunction with community partners.

Disciplines Involved

- Athletic Training
- Applied Exercise Science
- Creative Arts
- Dental Hygiene
- Dentistry
- English
- Medical Education Leadership
- Nursing
- Nurse anesthesia
- Occupational Therapy
- Osteopathic Medicine
- Pharmacy
- Physical Therapy
- Physician Assistant
- Psychology
- Public Health
- Social Work

Major Activities

Students in the Colleges of Health Professions and Pharmacy are introduced to IPE principles and practices beginning at orientation through an interprofessional case-based exercise that includes over 400 students from eight different disciplines. Interprofessional electives are offered in ethics, legal issues, cultural diversity in health, health systems, and other subjects. There are multiple initiatives such as the Inter-professional Geriatric Education Project, in which multi-professional student teams work with local geriatric facilities to provide integrated care. Partnerships have developed between individual instructors who bring classes together for single or multiple sessions across disciplines (e.g., social work and physical therapy). Our Clinical Simulation Program has

Outcomes of Evaluation

developed interprofessional case examples and we recently held an interprofessional case conference that incorporated eight disciplines from three colleges.

Our latest major development is that in the fall of 2010, UNE will bring together 250 incoming freshman in nursing, dental hygiene, occupational therapy, athletic training, and applied exercise science as a single cohort taking a common health sciences curriculum for the first 18 months of their undergraduate experience. Along with the traditional sciences and liberal arts distribution, they will also take an introduction to healthcare professions, issues in health care, ethics, and foundations of scientific inquiry. It is anticipated that they will also be taking some of these common courses alongside pre-pharmacy, pre-physician assistant, pre-physical therapy, and med-bio students. Starting in their fourth semester, they will begin to identify with their chosen professions and move into specialized training for the final two years.

Evaluation Measures

We currently employ basic evaluation procedures into all of our individual events, but these are not yet linked to comprehensive outcomes for our students. Like many programs in IPE, we have been challenged to develop sophistication in our evaluative process. This is primarily because of the wide range of activities as well as the unique nature of some of our collaborative efforts. With that in mind, the launch of IPEC is accompanied by increased attention to and development of a specific task group assigned to develop evaluative procedures.

We receive consistent positive evaluations from students of all the IPE activities, events, and courses to date, including numerous requests for more opportunities to incorporate IPE into their regular curriculum. The challenge, of course, is to overcome logistical hurdles to bringing together graduate students in particular, whose curricula are routinely tightly managed and filled with professional and disciplinary requirements.

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