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Six Creative Ways to Implement Interprofessional Education (IPE) and Practice – without an Academic Medical Center on Campus



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It seems logical that health professionals should be educated in a manner that promotes respect and effective communication across professional lines. Coordinating this type of academic experience is not without its challenges. This may seem more daunting on a campus that is not affiliated with an Academic Medical Center.

Creativity and ingenuity are needed to develop and deliver effective interprofessional education. Presently, I am employed at an institution where this is the case. Here are six pearls of wisdom from my experience with creating opportunities for interprofessional education and partnership.

1 Identify IPE champions on your campus

Campus partners in other disciplines such as psychology, audiology, education, nutrition, exercise science, social work, and child studies are motivated to engage in interprofessional education as part of their own credentialing processes. Do not overlook these valuable potential partners – engage with them. Start a discussion group or planning committee and invite potential partners. Faculty in health-related disciplines are hungry for opportunities for their students to work with nursing students.

2 Clearly define goals & outcomes

Goals specific to each discipline involved in the experience can be universal. Ethics, effective communication, working in teams, and clearly defined roles are essential IPEC Core Competencies (IPEC, 2016). These competencies cross disciplines. Clear communication with individuals and providers is needed for successful delivery of health care. Incorporating these competencies can be used in an interdisciplinary simulation experience.

3 Think outside the box

Just because you work in an institution that does not have an academic medical center as a partner, does not mean you are stuck. Consider art or theater majors who can practice the skills of being a model patient or other health care provider. These actors can be trained and used in simulation experiences.

The process of engaging health professional students and arts students can be a win for all participants as both mutually benefit in each of their own fields. The use of the theater students can cross disciplines so students in psychology, audiology, athletic training, nutrition, and exercise science can experience benefit along with nursing students. A simulated experience with an actor can be created to cross professions and promote interdisciplinary communication.



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(continued)



4 Use Technology

Asynchronous learning can be employed through your online learning platform. Students can engage in a case study that crosses disciplines on a discussion board. This can ease scheduling issues if assignments are asynchronous.

A personal favorite of mine is to use theater. Have students assess communication challenges and demonstrate an IPE opportunity. Classics such as *Rent* and *Philadelphia* can stimulate conversation about disease and stigma. *Miss Evers Boys* provides the opportunity to explore history and ethical dilemmas providers may face in the delivery of care and research. Students are often surprised by the inclusion of contemporary media in a course and engage whole heartedly in the experience.

Create an interdisciplinary book club for pre-health related professional students to review texts that demonstrate leadership or breakdowns in effective leadership. This can provide an excellent opportunity for discussion either in a face-to-face or asynchronous format. Some of my favorite books that I have found effective include Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* and Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers*.

5 Develop and offer Interdisciplinary courses

Working with the general education committee at your institution may allow for the opportunity to develop a course that is interdisciplinary in nature and open to students from a variety of settings. My current institution has offered this. Several courses are open to students and are presented in an interdisciplinary format. The perspectives of multiple disciplines are included. These courses are not restricted only to the major that is offering the class. This allows the opportunity for interprofessional learning and engagement.

For example, our department offers courses in growth and development across the lifespan and trans-professional communication that are open to students outside the nursing major. This allows for discussion among students and faculty from a variety of perspectives.

6 Include room for Reflection and Evaluation

Reflection allows the opportunity for individuals to process the psychomotor, behavioral, and affective experience of the IPE program. This needs to be included to ensure the development of reflection in practice over time. Providers who engage in reflection and evaluation of their own practice deliver care sensitive to individual and family needs and safety.

No one is perfect and we all can learn from experience. Be sure to allow participants the opportunity to provide feedback related to the interprofessional education or course experience. Listen to the feedback to continue to improve your course.

References

Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC). (2016), *Core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice; 2016 update*. Washington, DC; Interprofessional Education Collaborative.

