

## A Community College's Foray into Interprofessional Education

As initiatives and innovations in interprofessional education (IPE) continue to flourish in university settings, there is limited evidence this is occurring in two-year allied health and nursing programs found in community colleges. Recent literature indicates that graduates of associate degree allied health and nursing programs account for 49% of the total healthcare workforce (Brookings Institute, 2014). Graduates of these programs will work among those coming from university programs where IPE has been well established, therefore, it is imperative that this content be addressed at the community college. To meet this need, the Community College of Baltimore County's (CCBC) School of Health Professions (SHP) made IPE a major initiative. Thanks to the support of both Dr. Elizabeth Speakman and Dr. Lauren Collins from the Jefferson Center for Interprofessional Education (JCIPE) and grant funding from the Maryland Higher Education Commission, CCBC recently embarked on a comprehensive program to educate faculty about IPE and pilot student projects with the goal of infusing IPE throughout SHP's 13 healthcare programs.

There are multiple challenges to establishing a robust IPE program at the community college level. First, the IPE curriculum and projects must be appropriate for community college students who commute to campus, have varied educational backgrounds and often are the first members of their families to attend college. Second, well established IPE activities implemented at universities need to be adapted for the associate degree level in order for students who have only two years together to become educated and socialized into their respective professions and the healthcare system. Third, community colleges usually obtain external support from a smaller pool of donors than is available for four-year and graduate professional healthcare programs. In fact, many national IPE funding opportunities are not open to associate degree programs. Finally, with the mission of community college education focused on teaching and workforce development, research opportunities, though important, are secondary.

Despite these barriers, the need for IPE in community college settings remains essential to collaborative practice in the healthcare system and CCBC is meeting the challenge. As a leading provider of undergraduate healthcare education and workforce development in the Baltimore Metropolitan area (Baltimore Business Journal, 2014), CCBC has undertaken pilot IPE projects in the majority of the 13 health professions programs so that graduates might understand and be prepared for interprofessional and collaborative practice.

Faculty development was an essential starting point for the CCBC initiative. Education has included sending teams to: Collaborating Across Borders (CAB V); conferences sponsored by the State University of New York (SUNY) Buffalo and the National League for Nursing (NLN); and the *Train the Trainer Faculty Development Program* at the University of Virginia's Center for Academic Strategic Partnerships for Interprofessional Research and Education (ASPIRE). CCBC also hosted an on-site workshop featuring Dr. Jane Kirschling from the University of Maryland IPE Center, and plans to host the ASPIRE team from UVA in late spring. An Internal Steering Committee was established and plans are underway for an External Advisory Board consisting of members of local hospitals, long term care facilities, and partner residential communities. Evidence of IPE is now visible in SHP's Mission and Values statements, and will be built into the next Strategic Plan.

To date, several IPE projects have been developed as outcomes of faculty development. One involves dental hygiene, nursing, and respiratory therapy students, who will identify pediatric patients with asthma during a routine screening in the dental clinic. An asthma action plan will be subsequently developed and shared with the child's family. This project will utilize the CCBC dental clinic, which serves families in the surrounding Baltimore community.

A second project involves a simulation that will be implemented in two parts across two



semesters. Nursing, Respiratory Therapy, and Occupational Therapy assistant students are involved in this project which initially starts with the scenario of a COPD patient admitted into the acute care hospital. Ethical issues and communication breakdowns are built into part 2 of this simulation to address some of the core competencies of IPE. Both of these initiatives will be incorporated into the regular curricula of the relevant disciplines, evaluated by faculty and students, and revised accordingly.

Another initiative was adapted from the Health Mentors Program at the Jefferson Center for IPE. In the fall of 2015, second-year students from the Physician Assistant, Nursing, Respiratory Therapy, Mental Health, Occupational Therapy Assistant, and Dental Hygiene programs came together for several meetings which focused on the core competencies of IPE. Students were assigned to two groups for team interviews of health mentors living in low income housing in Baltimore City. Pre-and post-tests on perceptions and attitudes towards IPE were administered to students. The project was replicated in spring 2016 with three groups of first- and second-year students from the Nursing, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Mental Health, and Radiology Programs. Initial results indicate students' mean scores increased on measures for overall attitudes and perceptions of IPE.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

# COLLABORATIVE HEALTHCARE

INTERPROFESSIONAL PRACTICE,  
EDUCATION, AND EVALUATION

A publication of **Jefferson Center for  
Interprofessional Education**

CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

Based on the experience and the enthusiasm of faculty and students, SHP will continue to create and evaluate initiatives and infuse IPE into health professions programs. New funding, if available, will accelerate participation by additional SHP disciplines, training of clinical preceptors, and a more robust community project supporting elderly adults living with chronic morbidities to age in place. SHP appreciates the expertise and resources of the Jefferson Center for Interprofessional Education (JCIPE)

as work continues to implement IPE and collaborative practice in associate degree nursing and allied health programs.

---

**Judith Blum, MS, OTR/L**

*Associate Professor and OTA Program Director  
Community College of Baltimore County*

**Mary Kay DeMarco, PhD, RN, CNE**

*Professor and Nursing Program Director  
Community College of Baltimore County*

## REFERENCES

1. Baltimore Business Journal (2014). *Here are the five largest professional schools in Maryland.* Retrieved from: <http://www.bizjournals.com/baltimore/blog/lists/2014/12/here-are-the-5-largest-professional-schools-in.html>.
2. Ross, M., Svajlenka, N., & Williams, J. (2014). *Part of the solution: Pre-baccalaureate healthcare workers in a time of health system change.* Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2014/healthcare-workers#/M10420>.