Developing a service-learning project in a health professions curriculum

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DEVELOPING A SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT IN A HEALTH PROFESSIONS CURRICULUM

Objective: To develop and pilot a service-learning project for first year physician assistant (PA) students at a well-established metropolitan university PA program to encourage life-long community service.

Methods: Students were required as part of their course evaluation in Preventive Medicine and Community Health, to select a community agency of their choosing and to volunteer a minimum of six hours during the fall semester of 2001. Activities were documented and a reflective statement regarding their service was required.

Results: Three hundred seventy one (371) hours of community service were documented. Populations served included the homeless, disabled, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and persons affected by domestic violence. Student impressions regarding service-learning were broadly categorized in the following categories: Enhanced Community Awareness; Increased Exposure to Diverse Cultures; Positive Impact on Future Practice; Enhanced Appreciation of Bio-psycho-social aspects of Health Care; Commitment to Continue Community Service.

Discussion: This demonstration project can be easily replicated and can be utilized by other health professions programs interested in incorporating service-learning into the curriculum. The reflective statements and discussion show that service-learning benefits students by: beginning or continue life-long commitment to community service; enhancing classroom learning; and making lasting impact on their futures as health professionals and as active members of their communities.

Learning Objectives:

- The participant will be able to
• Recognize the value of a service-learning project in the health professions curriculum.
• Identify critical elements of a service-learning project.
• Develop a service-learning project in health professions curriculum.

Keywords: Service Learning, Health Workers Training

Presenting author's disclosure statement:
I do not have any significant financial interest/arrangement or affiliation with any organization/institution whose products or services are being discussed in this session.