The Missouri LEND & Saint Louis University College for Public Health and Social Justice Partnership

ABOUT

This Diversity and Health Equity Collaborative (DHEC) team is a partnership between the Missouri Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) Program and The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) academic concentration in the Masters of Public Health program at Saint Louis University, College for Public Health and Social Justice (SLU-CPHSJ). The collaboration is unique in that it brings together two of the biggest MCH training programs in the state. SLU is the only accredited school of public health program with an MCH concentration in the state of Missouri.

The team members bring the training, leadership, and passion to lead and implement efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity of students enrolled in their programs. Core team members include the Missouri LEND Program Director, the Director of the MCH program at SLU-CPHSJ, and an associate professor of behavioral health from SLU with a strong background in health equity and diversity. The larger home team includes the Director of the Office of Institution of Equity and Diversity at SLU, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at SLU-CPHSJ, and the Director of the Master of Public Health (MPH) Program and Chair of the Standing Diversity Committee of SLU-CPHSJ.

The Missouri team’s primary aim is to improve their reach to potential students from minority and underserved populations, increasing enrollment in the Missouri LEND and MCH-MPH programs. The method they chose to use for the DHEC project is the development of a faculty training designed to improve instructor skill in engaging students in productive dialogues around cultural competence, with a focus on implicit bias.

THE NEED

The leadership of both programs felt that they needed to work together to establish and build a cross-disciplinary training for faculty to improve clinical practice and MCH training in their state. The team hypothesized that the training would ultimately enhance diversity among their trainees by building faculty capacity to address racial and ethnic diversity and cultural and linguistic competence.

SLU-CPHSJ hopes to foster a positive and open environment to facilitate learning and build capacity to discuss racial equity as a key tenant of social justice. In 2015, students and faculty...
completed a survey to assess strengths and weaknesses around diversity and inclusiveness within the College. Students offered mixed responses on whether the environment values diversity and promotes free expression of ideas and collaboration with classmates. Students also suggested that to improve diversity and equity, a better understanding of the historical context of the community surrounding SLU was needed and there should be more opportunities for the diverse student body to interact with one another. While faculty reported knowledge of communications and behavioral practices, there was still a feeling of inadequacy among faculty in their ability to facilitate dialogue around prejudice and implicit bias in the classroom.

**APPROACH**

The partnership began by uniting personnel and identifying current resources that already exist on both campuses. The team originally envisioned the rapid development of a training curriculum during the course of the collaborative. However, they quickly realized that a strong curriculum would require more focused and thoughtful efforts. They were also faced with challenges associated with time to commit to development and work across two universities. They scheduled monthly meetings and made use of technology to ensure maximum participation. The team developed a solid plan and timeline for the development of the curriculum. They also built in time and a process for piloting the training with students and community organizations. Currently, members of the team are reviewing different elements of the training to determine content and hope to have the training ready to pilot in early 2018.

**ACTION PLAN**

**Short-Term**

- Identify best practices
- Inventory existing resources
- Develop syllabi

**Medium-Term**

- Develop training
- Pilot test training
- Roll out and launch training

**Long-Term**

- Measure increased awareness and self-efficacy among faculty

**IMPACT OF DHEC PARTICIPATION**

Participating in the DHEC has allowed the Missouri team to build an interuniversity team between the two leading MCH programs in the state. This highly collaborative team has not only begun working on the training project together, but has built a solid foundation for ongoing work and communication. The team is working on their next steps for achieving their medium- and long-term action steps and continuing their monthly meetings. In the words of their team leader, “We believe we have the positive perceptions, and normative beliefs to move this project forward. More work is needed, however, to build the team sense of control and self-efficacy and team knowledge related to cultural competence.”

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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