A Dietetics Major Professional Practice Course Transformed: Students as creators of knowledge

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About the Project
Defining the Challenge

Asynchronous Learning

Information Overload

Transitions from Academic to Practice Settings

Organizational Constraints

Diversity of Students & Educators

Strategy for Addressing the Challenges
- Revised pilot course informed by key informant feedback:
  - a self-directed learning model to address asynchronous learning, to suit diversity of learning styles and to prevent information overload
  - development of an open-access online repository to house student-created educational media to help students recall foundational knowledge during practicum
- Predicted outcomes for students:
  - enhanced student engagement and ownership of learning
  - increased skills with educational media development
  - increased self-efficacy to learn during practicum
  - engagement with dietitians
- All of the above outcomes aid in transitioning students from academic to practice setting to achieve success during practicum placements
- This is only one of many strategies to approach these challenges
- Aspects of organizational constraints related to scheduling of practicum placements could not be addressed within the scope of this project

About the Course

Purpose – to prepare and orient students for practicum
- Timing – final university-based course of Dietetics Program prior to practicum
- Format – three hours per day for three weeks of May

Project Goals
1. Implement a summer 2014 Dietetics professional practice course revision pilot project
2. Evaluate the 2014 pilot course using qualitative methodologies, focusing on both the student experience and the experience of the dietitian advisors
3. Utilize evaluation findings to: (a) determine how approaches utilized in the pilot can be integrated into the course going forward, and (b) develop guidelines and resources

Revised Course

Pedagogical Shift

Lecture-Based Learning
Students as consumers of knowledge

Self-Directed Learning
Students as creators of knowledge

Technological Shift

Minimal Role
Limited use by way of lecture slides and course site

Central Role
Teaching, Learning & Receiving

Course Schedule

Week 1
- Student groups meet RD advisor
- Conduct needs assessment

Week 2
- Develop and compile content into educational media and student-led workshop

Week 3
- Students conduct workshops
- Self-reflection

Other Features
- Students each conduct a 1-hour nutrition counselling session for volunteer clients, to practice and build on previous knowledge and skills
- One dietitian-led workshop was retained from the previous course design, which was particularly engaging and participatory in design

Evaluation Process

Phase 1: Pre-Practicum Assessment
1. Assess pilot course effect on student engagement with learning
2. Assess pilot course effect on student engagement with professionals

Phase 2: Practicum Assessment
3. Assess the use of “just-in-time” learning during internship
4. Find out how FINH 480 can be refined in future years

Evaluation Results
1. Increased student engagement compared to previous course design
2. Student improvement of technology skills, knowledge and use in education
3. Increase in student self-efficacy to seek help and to learn about technology
4. Enhanced student education through use of technology
5. Rich student-advisor interactions
   - Improvement of scheduling and professional communication needed
6. Preparation for practicum noted as primary perceived value of student-created educational media
   - Knowledge gained in practice settings quickly superseded the academic learning displayed in student-created educational media

Student Project Assistant Reflections

Time investment: Time involved in the creation of one course is very substantial. Development requires substantial critical thinking, discussion, collaboration, revision, and re-creation.
Technology: A powerful reusable tool to display course content, appeal multiple learning styles and increase student engagement. However it requires a thoughtful and detailed maintenance plan as well as the development of specialized skills.
Familiarity with practicum resources: As future interns, this is a benefit. Gained enhanced skills that will be beneficial as a professional: Creating a learning environment, giving and receiving feedback, critical thinking, communication, analyzing and prioritizing, technology, conflict resolution, etc.

Towards the Future

- How do interns manage academic and applied knowledge during practicum?
- How do other health discipline programs address asynchronous learning?
- How do Dietetic Programs across Canada address the defined challenges?
- How do Dietetic Programs across Canada address the defined challenges?

More Information
For more information: email karol.traviss@ubc.ca or visit dietetics.landfood.ubc.ca/year-5-interns/

Acknowledgements
- UBC Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF)
- UBC Dietetics Program
- Key Informants