The University of Sydney Teaching Colloquium
2012
Community Engaged Learning and Teaching (CELT) Session
Showcasing Inspirational programs

TITLE: Clinical Home Project, Sydney Nursing School
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1. Briefly describe your community engaged learning and teaching (CELT) program
This project immerses final year, pre-registration nursing students in an innovative combination of classroom and clinical learning environments with the goal of promoting greater social integration within workplace settings and opportunities for deeper community and professional enculturation. Each student attends a supervised, extended clinical practicum in a teaching hospital that has a University of Sydney Clinical School, and students have access to the clinical school facilities, including libraries and learning and teaching spaces. Simultaneously, students engage in face-to-face & online contact with their four unit of study teaching teams. There is an intensive preparation program prior to the practicum and an intensive debriefing program at the end.

2. Highlight the key learning outcomes for the students and the community benefits
Student learning outcomes include: (i) increased ‘readiness to practice’ capabilities; (ii) increased level of confidence about professional practice; (iv) improved student engagement within workplace culture and sense of inclusion within a health care institution. Benefits to the community include: (i) demonstrated successful partnerships between the university and health services; (ii) anticipated better retention of new graduate nurses in their first year of practice; (iii) increased scope for richer patient/student engagement and relationships than current more fragmented practicums offer.

3. Summarise the outcomes (student and community) that have been measured or reported.
The project is being comprehensively evaluated from perspective of all key stakeholders. Students report that the model facilitates (i) deep learning that links theory with practice; (ii) personal perception of growth and achievement; (iii) skill and confidence building; and (iv) recognition of the importance for nurses of healthy workplace and patient/client relationships. Industry partners report that these students demonstrate ‘readiness for practice’ that is entirely consistent with confident beginning practitioner capabilities; increased employment rate of our graduates into high demand transition programs reflects this. Establishment of new clinical home reference groups with key local health district staff demonstrates strengthening of university/community relationships.

4. Discuss the key ISSUE for your CELT program.
Issue 3: Authentic assessment. This means that ‘students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills’ (Mueller, 2011). In this context, it is important for the assessment to focus on tasks that are meaningful in terms of the work the student will undertake as a health professional. During their clinical practicum, students engage in further developing their competency in performing specific clinical skills through supervised practice in real world settings. In the final on-campus week, this learning is consolidated and subsequently examined in authentic assessment. At this Colloquium round table, we will discuss some of the ways in which the ten-week practicum prepares students for these assessments.

5. Provide tips for others wanting to engage in CELT projects?
Extensive consultation with potential community/industry partners; continual involvement during development phase of all relevant learning and teaching staff; appropriate planning for evaluation phase and for sustainability; supportive and detailed student preparation.