# An Innovative Approach to Interprofessional, Team-based Service-learning at Community Sites Serving Older Adults

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## Background

In Fall 2015, St. Catherine University began offering a new course, *IPE 2800 Healthcare Teams: Opportunities and Challenges in Aging.* A hybrid of classroom, online, and service-learning activities, IPE 2800 demonstrates effective use of service-learning to enhance interprofessional education. In Fall 2016, the course was offered a second time, in four course sections with a total of 133 students. Part of the course involves students working in small teams to complete community service-learning with elder populations for 14 hours over seven weeks.

The Centre for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE), recognizes interprofessional education as "occasions when members or students of two or more professions learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care and services (2016). In service-learning, "students engage in community service activities with intentional academic and learning goals and opportunities for reflection that connect to their academic disciplines" (Cress, 2013, p. 9). Through *IPE 2800's* innovative combination of service-learning and curricular learning, students advance their understanding of aging, engaging with elders, and working in teams.

## Implementation

The team-based model of service-learning used in IPE 2800 incorporates the complementary principles and student learning outcomes of IPE, service-learning, and St. Kate's Liberal Arts Education.

| IPE learning goals | Service-learning student outcomes | St. Kate's Liberal Education learning goals |
|---|---|---|
| • Knowledge of the diverse roles/responsibilities on a health care team, using the knowledge, skills, and expertise of each member to improve patient/client outcomes<br>• A strong sense of interprofessionality grounded in team values and ethics<br>• Collaboration and team communication skills to meet the needs of diverse patient/client populations, solve patient care problems, and improve the quality of care<br>• Leadership, followership, and team skills that can be applied in multiple settings<br>• The capacity to critically interpret, participate, or conduct interprofessional research in order to increase the body of knowledge for collaborative practice and IPE | • Personal and interpersonal development<br>• Engaging with diversity<br>• Creating student connections with peers, the college and the community<br>• Deeper understanding of curriculum<br>• Development of reflective and critical thinking skills<br>• Increased problem-solving<br>• Perspective transformation<br>• Cultivates civic values, knowledge, skills, efficacy and commitment | • Leadership and collaboration<br>• Ethics and social justice<br>• Diversity and Global Perspectives<br>• Critical and creative Inquiry<br>• Discipline-based competence<br>• Effective communication in a variety of modes<br>• Purposeful life-long learning |

During the first week of the semester, students are introduced to service-learning through faculty presentation and readings. The second week students learn about the various service-learning opportunities available, sign up for the location of their choice, and form teams. Service-learning site coordinators come to campus the third week for an initial orientation, and students complete service-learning from week 5 - week 12.

| Preparation<br>(weeks 1-4) | Service-learning<br>(weeks 5-12) | Wrap up<br>(weeks 13-14) |
|---|---|---|
| • Students read and discuss *What are service-learning and civic engagement?* (Cress, 2013)<br>• Students complete site preference forms and pre-reflection questions<br>• On-campus orientation with community partner organizations | • Students work in teams of 4-5 for 2 hours/week across 7 weeks, engaging with elders at 11 community partner organizations<br>• Service-learning activities include: music, Tai Chi, baking, bowling, knitting, quilting, singing, poetry, art, games, among others<br>• Each week student teams reflect on their experience by providing group written responses to faculty prompts | • Students submit individual written reflection on their experience with service-learning, working with elders, and working in teams (summary information shared with sites)<br>• Students and community partner organizations participate in evaluation |

*Integrated REFLECTION throughout* →

## Outcomes

### Students



"I enjoyed my service learning experience in this course. It gave us a great way to apply some of the things we were learning throughout the semester, as well as a different way to learn about the aging population. We had a lot of time to talk with the residents we were working with and I think that this was a great hands on way to learn about the elderly, outside of reading textbooks."

"The connection between class and service learning was strong. We often did things in class that related to the service learning work. It was also a great time to learn a lot for my future career, and working with people in general."

• More nuanced and complex understanding of elder experience
• Increased ability to problem-solve and engage in teams
• Reported enhanced academic learning through "hands on" experience
• Greater connection to community

"I believe service learning is important for students to be able to experience firsthand the things they are reading about and discussing in class. Service learning provides an opportunity for students to work with and talk to the people they are learning about. In ideal situations, students are able to draw connections between their school work and service learning experience. It can also be gratifying and humbling."

### Community



Students completed over **1,850** hours of service-learning in one semester

Allowed St. Kate's to further collaborative work with the following community partner organizations:

• Carondelet Village
• Catholic Elder Care
• Cerenity Senior Care - Marian
• Cerenity Senior Care – Humboldt
• East Side Elders
• HealthEast Passport
• Korean Service Center
• Lyngblomsten
• Sholom Home
• St. Therese - New Hope
• The Wellington

**At Lyngblomsten, IPE 2800 service-learning students provide:**

• **Eagerness to engage with residents**
• **Enthusiasm to help and support residents**
• **Interest in residents that is fresh**
• **Hope for the future for residents**
• **The ability for residents to support the local college**
• **Friendship**
• **Community building for residents**
• **The ability for residents to continue to "mentor"**
• **Support to the mission of our organization: . . . <u>preserving and enhancing the quality of life</u> of the older adults we serve.**

## Faculty and Community Work & Learning Staff

• Service-learning provides students with the opportunity to process their thoughts and feelings about elders through their experiences with team members, while learning about aging in teams in the classroom
• This course thoughtfully integrates best practices of service-learning with best practices of interprofessional education to the mutual benefit of students and the community
• The scope and size of IPE 2800 has allowed St. Kate's to deepen our service-learning partnership with organizations serving elder populations in the metro area

## Recommendations

As with any IPE activity, we recommend all planning, development and implementation of team-based service-learning be done collaboratively. For IPE 2800, we worked collaboratively with faculty from various programs in the School of Health, service-learning staff from St. Kate's Center for Community Work and Learning, and staff from multiple community organizations in the metro area.

Service-learning activities at different community sites varied considerably. However, based on feedback from students, what was most important was not the activity itself so much as the opportunity to consistently interact with and develop personal relationships with elders. When establishing service-learning activities for student teams, faculty/staff should select activities conducive to student interaction with elders that simultaneously meets the programmatic needs of partner organizations.

Students who completed the course also recommended that:
• Student teams have an organization contact who is accessible to assist them with problems or questions that arise
• Students, faculty, and organizations have clear expectations of responsibilities/roles of the service-learning teams
• Service-learning involve engagement in pre-programmed activities rather than student teams being responsible for development of activities
• Observation is not enough. Participation and direct engagement with elders is essential to their learning.

## Conclusions

Based on our observations of student teams at community sites as well as feedback from students teams via weekly debriefing forms, class discussion, written reflections and course evaluations, service-learning proved to be an essential component to student learning and development in *IPE 2800 Healthcare Teams: Opportunities and Challenges in Aging.* Service-learning allowed students "the opportunity to build from and contribute their strengths to the service-learning projects using different skill sets" (Cress, 2013). We found that combining these individual skill sets with team skill sets greatly enhanced the service-learning experience of students as well. Finally, offering this course with a service-learning component broadened and deepened St. Catherine University's community engagement with elders and expanded our University-community partnership and impact.

## References

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