

Old Dominion University School of Nursing Population Health Learning Hub: Academic-Practice-Community Partnership Overview

Old Dominion University (ODU) School of Nursing (SON) has a 15-year history of community collaborations with volunteer coalitions and non-profit organizations. Unique to the pre-licensure BSN curriculum is a required two-semester community health course and clinical sequence. Thus, our community health program is uniquely situated to provide our nursing students with longitudinal experiences in community settings. Our population health-learning hub project built upon existing partnerships between Old Dominion University (ODU) School of Nursing, the Food Bank of Southeastern Virginia (FBSEVA), and Sentara Interprofessional Care Clinic (IPC) in collaboration with Eastern Virginia Medical School. A new partnership was formed with 2-1-1 Virginia (state/community agency) for the purposes of the learning hub.

An estimated 43% of the residents in Norfolk, Virginia, where the ODU main campus is situated, experience a lack of affordable healthcare, education, and food accessibility, and an estimated 19.3% of Norfolk residents suffer from food insecurity in contrast to 11.2% statewide. Further, 79% of survey participants reported eating less than the recommended five fruits and vegetables a day. To address these community gaps, our project leveraged existing academic-practice-community partnerships to expand on assessment and referral services by a student-driven interprofessional practice clinic. The IPC is housed within the Sentara Ambulatory Care Clinic that serves uninsured and under-insured individuals who live at 200% or below the poverty line. It is a no stethoscope clinic aimed at addressing the social determinant of health that lead to health disparities. The goals of this project were two-fold: 1) to build the capacity of undergraduate and graduate nursing students to collaborate in interprofessional care settings, and 2) to bridge education gaps to leverage existing community resources to address SDOH and food insecurity. We aimed to improve the health of vulnerable populations through community partnerships and engagement, while familiarizing students with long-term, grassroots community and/or neighborhood efforts regarding health promotion and disease prevention. These partnerships provided opportunities to work as part of an interdisciplinary professional and lay team of health care advocates in multiple settings. The overarching goals of the project were met through a series of interwoven projects designed to build the workforce capacity of nurses to work within inter- and intra-professional teams to address health disparities of the underserved population in southeastern Virginia. Project achievements included developing sustainable educational products that specifically address SDOH and food insecurity, which are now implemented within the BSN program, on-going collaboration with partners to address food insecurity through completion of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications and other agency referrals, and facilitating an interprofessional practicum experience for BSN students that permits application of new knowledge in active community clinical environments under the mentorship of graduate nursing students and faculty. Further, the learning-hub projects have led to strengthened partnerships, continued engagements, a pilot research project and additional support for Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) funding to continue our work in primary care and community settings.