

Summer Instructional Development Progress Report

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Last summer I was able to receive a summer course development grant from the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and learning. Through this grant, I have been able to redesign HSRV 200, Behavioral Therapies. This course has not been taught in our department for several years. Prior to this year, students completed the first two years (including Behavioral Therapies) at Ivy Tech and then transferred into our program for two years to complete the bachelor's degree. This is the first year our program is offering the entire four years at IPFW. Because it has been several years since HSRV 200 has been taught, it needed to be updated to fit the needs of our students and community. This is a required course and one that prepares students for their first clinical placement in a community agency. The course also prepares students for two other courses, HSRV 315, Introduction to Theories of Therapy and HSRV 320, Case Methods, both of which are required for the degree.

New Course Components

Service learning. Prior to contacting potential sites, I met with Lesa Vartanian in the psychology department. She uses service learning as a large component in one of her classes. She was able to provide me information regarding site contracts, student evaluations, reflection paper ideas, and other advice related to her experience. Her ideas assisted me in forming the concept of what the students would be doing at the sites, the site supervisor's evaluation of the student, and the reflection paper the students would complete at the end of their experience.

During the summer of 2007, several community agency sites were approached to provide a service learning component for the course. A total of five sites were developed from which the students could select. The sites included Park Center, Community Action of Northeast Indiana (CANI), Vincent House, Early Childhood Alliance, and Easter Seals ARC. A brief description of each site follows.

At Early Childhood Alliance, one student worked with a program mentor who assists area daycares in obtaining accreditation. Part of what the mentor examines and provides feedback on is behavioral techniques to use with the kids. Similarly, the mentor uses forms of behavioral techniques with the daycare providers.

Two students were placed at Vincent House. There, they worked with case managers applying behavioral interventions with the residents and the resident's children. One student also worked with the clinical director and was able to learn how behavioral techniques were applied in various parts of the organization.

Park Center offered several students experience in two settings, depending on the interests of the student. In the first, students had an opportunity to examine a behavioral intervention program in one of Park Center's residential treatment centers. For the second experience, students went out into the community with case managers, visiting people within their homes.

At Easter Seals ARC, one student was able to work with a behavioral specialist. This gave her the opportunity to see behavioral techniques applied to people with disabilities. This particular student expressed some apprehension being placed at this site, but reported that it was a good experience. She was able to talk in depth to the behavioral specialist to begin to understand what she could experience as a human services worker.

Finally, Community Action of Northeast Indiana (CANI) is the fourth site at which students were placed. Students are working with the Healthy Families program. This program covers discipline and other parenting information to families within the area.

The logistics of developing the sites and connecting students to them was more difficult than I imagined. Both agency personnel and students had busy schedules and compromises had

to be made on both ends in order to make this component work. In the end, all of the students participated in the service learning component. As I had hoped, the students were able to see behavioral techniques applied in the field, even when the techniques were not obvious. For example, one student commented that during her visits with a CANI case worker, she at first could not see any behavioral techniques being applied. As she gave it more thought, however, she realized that each time the case worker encouraged the parent, the case manager was using positive reinforcement.

As an additional result of this component, students began to understand that when working with people, things do not always happen as planned. They were able to experience some frustration of cancelled appointments, clients not showing for appointments, and ways of dealing with these situations. This is particularly important for students to understand as they prepare for their first clinical placement.

Practicing behavioral skills

After presenting information on the behavioral technique, as a class we would put it in action using different case examples. These case examples allowed students to see behavioral techniques applied to different problems and disorders. As students began to understand how the technique is applied, they then broke into small groups of 4-5 to practice the techniques on their own. These small groups allowed me to circulate through the room and assist and provide feedback as necessary. The arrangement worked well. On tests over the material, where students were expected to demonstrate application of the techniques, students performed very well.

Students also developed a fictional case, each with a different disorder. Several different disorders were provided and students randomly selected one. They were expected to research each problem or disorder in order to make the case as realistic as possible. Students were then to

apply each behavioral technique we covered to the case. Students demonstrated understanding of each technique. The students also created a PowerPoint presentation, which they gave to the class, covering their case and included the technique they thought worked best for their problem or disorder.

Reflected dialogue and information/ideas

The course had made use of WebCT as students have been using the discussion boards to keep class discussions continuing after class ends. Students have been able to comment on the different behavioral techniques we covered as well as ask each other questions to clarify the techniques or draw out opinions of the various techniques.

I also created PowerPoint files for each of the chapters we covered. A “skeleton” version of the files was provided to the students prior to class. I have found that this limits the note-taking and allows students more time to discuss and ask questions.

Reflections on the course

One of my disappointments of the course has been the textbook. Its content was too elementary and felt restrictive. Students have made comments that while the book helped make the techniques easy to understand, they also felt that it did not provide enough depth to the topics. As a result, a new textbook has been selected for next semester. I feel that the new one will still make the techniques easy to understand, but will provide the depth lacking in the previous textbook.

I appreciated the service learning component to this project. I have been considering the idea of increasing the number of hours the students spend at the site. This semester, students spent a total of 5 hours in service learning. It would provide them a greater experience if I could increase the amount of time to 10 or even 15 hours. As part of this time, it would also benefit the

students to attend parts of the orientation of the site. This will give them a greater picture of the program in which they will participate and the mission of the organization. Increasing the hours will require more site development, however, but is something that I can begin to do.

I believe this project was successful. It has provided important experiences for the students. Originally, our department planned on teaching the course during fall semester only. We discovered, however, that there are many students who need to take the course in the spring. Therefore, we opened a section which has more students registered for it than fall semester. This will require one or two more sites for the service learning component. I appreciate the opportunity and support I received from CELT in transforming this course to better meet the needs of our students and community.