

# Building bridges: Collaboration between community college and university



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education (IPE);  
Collaboration;  
Student success;  
Simulation

## Abstract

**Background:** Two midwestern United States colleges have developed a relationship that is an exemplar of interprofessional education.

**Method:** Faculty from both colleges developed simulations. Students were divided between each campus for morning simulations with rotation to the other school for an afternoon session.

**Results:** One hundred percent of associate of science in nursing students and 84% of bachelor of science in nursing students rated the simulation as *helpful* or *very helpful*. Students reported that the experience allowed a more realistic view of nursing. Yearly joint simulations are now planned. The activity demonstrates importance of interprofessional education, collaboration, and sharing resources.

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In today's world of higher education, every school competes for students. Nursing colleges and universities offer scholarships, entice students through creative opportunities, and market in a manner designed to promote specific programs ultimately seeking higher retention and graduation rates of nursing students. What seems to be missing is a willingness to collaborate between schools of nursing with the mutual goal of relationship building and student success and a seamless transition across levels of nursing education.

The purpose of this project was to develop an interprofessional education (IPE) relationship between two college nursing programs; a midwestern community college and university with adjacent campuses, both offering top-rated nursing programs. The community college offers the associate of science in nursing (ASN) and, the university, a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) degree. One objective

related to this goal was to enact a collaborative activity across two different schools of nursing with the purpose of exposing students to nursing team members who may practice differently. Enabling students to practice the development of rapid team-building skills through the use of combined simulations and fostering relationships between faculty at both campuses were other project objectives.

## Background and Literature Review

Recommendation number four of the Institute of Medicine's 2010 report is that the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree should be increased to 80% by the year 2020 (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2010). The report has put increasing pressure on traditional programs, with 4-year universities focusing on students with a BSN and community colleges that focus on an ASN. Consequently, universities are rapidly increasing their

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enrollment while dealing with limited clinical sites and a lack of qualified faculty. Community colleges have a high number of applications for a limited number of student placements and struggle with job placement postgraduation. To address these concerns, some universities are now partnering with community colleges in order to offer concurrent enrollment programs and to cooperate in the education and seamless transition of students. Earlier competitive relationships between many community colleges and universities are now called upon to move into more collaborative relationships (Linda, Mtshali, & Engelbrecht, 2013).

The Quality and Safety Education for Nurses project, "... addresses the challenge of preparing future nurses with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to continuously improve the quality and safety of the healthcare systems within which they work" (Case Western Reserve University, 2014a, para.1). Quality and Safety Education for Nurses outcomes related to the competency of teamwork and collaboration involve 11 knowledge, 16 skill, and 15 attitude-based components (Case Western Reserve University, 2014b). Patient outcomes are enhanced by interprofessional collaboration in health care (Chung et al., 2012; Daley, 2012). Most published examples of interprofessional collaboration are between health care students across different disciplines such as nursing, medicine, and psychology. There has been little published research on collaboration between nurses or nursing students from different academic backgrounds or specialties. However, in reality, nurses are often called upon to transfer to unfamiliar units and to work with unfamiliar team mates sometimes in specialty areas in which they are not trained. Nursing practice requires nurses to learn to work with one another in teams, often with nurses from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. There is little preparation for this expectation at the student level.

According to Gale and Beal (2013), "academic-practice partnerships are a critical key to strengthen nursing practice and assist nursing in leading change and advancing health care in our communities" (p.21). To explore this further, two colleges of nursing in the midwestern United States, one a community college and the other a university, developed a student-centered, collaborative relationship through the use

of simulation that is now considered an exemplar of IPE within the community. Although the two schools are located on adjoining properties with a shared building between them, in the past, there has been little interaction between the programs. Both schools have outstanding community support on an individual level. The community college offers an ASN in nursing, whereas the university offers a traditional BSN program and a registered nurse-to-BSN on-line completion option. The students are in close proximity to one another and are likely to practice in the same regional communities.

Nursing faculty from each school developed a joint simulation to be implemented between nursing students from each school to improve interprofessional collaboration. According to Murray (2014), "Simulation is an effective means of augmenting real-life clinical experiences for undergraduate nursing students" (p.11). The initial project was developed by university faculty in an effort to form relationships with faculty at the community college. In the beginning, the community college was cautious and unsure of the rationale for the collaboration. However, after several meetings that involved planning for the event and a clear elucidation of the goals for the simulation, faculty began to experience mutual trust, and a partnership was developed. At the conclusion of the project, both faculty at the community college and university were highly motivated to continue a working relationship.

## Method

Three nursing faculty members from the university and three from the community college were involved in this project. Each campus developed one simulation. (See Table 1 for a description of the simulations.) The focus for the community college was medical–surgical, whereas the university's focus was on communication skills with an end-of-life component. Both scenarios involved family members and utilized complicating factors: In the community college simulation, the family and patient revealed concerns regarding the emergency condition that had

**Table 1** Joint simulations

	Community college simulation	University simulation
Scenario focus	Response in an emergent situation	Communication/End of life
Location	Medical–Surgical unit of hospital	Medical–Surgical unit of hospital
Family or significant other	Daughter(s)	Two daughters
Complicating factors	Family and patient concerns about condition	Conflicting views of sisters regarding end-of-life issues
Student objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To demonstrate effective communication with patient and team members in an emergent situation.</li> <li>2. To provide appropriate emergency interventions for a patient experiencing a wound dehiscence.</li> <li>3. To administer medications in a safe and appropriate manner</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To communicate effectively with family</li> <li>2. To initiate communication with health care provider regarding pain management and/or DNR status issue.</li> <li>3. To use critical thinking to determine appropriate pain management.</li> </ol>

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