

Promising Practice Brief



Promising Practice Briefs are produced by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities through the UCEDD Resource Center (URC) in conjunction with its network members.

September 2014
Tanisha Clarke, MPH

A UCEDD's Focus on Supporting a Diverse Community of Trainees

What makes a Promising Practice?

Promising Practice Briefs are intended to highlight projects of excellence with a goal of offering a program model from which University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs) can glean inspiration for new activities and promising practices to augment their own work. A promising UCEDD practice may be a research or evaluation project, policy analysis, data assessment, outreach initiative, or awareness effort. It may provide a direct service or a supported opportunity to people with a developmental disability, indirect support to family and community caregivers, or interdisciplinary training for students, fellows, professionals, and policymakers. It may involve leadership development, community work, or clinical practice.

While Promising Practices are unique in their workings, they offer replicable components for diverse settings and share these common characteristics:

- It reaches the population of focus
- It is an effort characterized by quality
- Its impact is measurable
- It addresses the aspirations of individuals
- It is respectful in its methods
- It safeguards those it intends to benefit

Introduction

The demographic of the U.S. is rapidly changing. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), minorities, now 37 percent of the U.S. population, are projected to comprise 57 percent of the population in 2060. The total minority population would more than double, from 116.2 million to 241.3 million over that period (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). However, minority populations are at an increased risk for developmental and other disabilities or for developing secondary conditions (Administration on Developmental Disabilities, 2009). Without

significant interventions, the nation's growing diverse population is therefore likely to be largely impacted by the persistent racial and ethnic disparities that currently exist.

Fortunately, there is compelling research that racial and ethnic minority health care providers are more likely to serve minority and medically underserved minorities, thereby reducing cultural and linguistic barriers, improving cultural competence, increasing access to care, and increasing patient satisfaction (HHS Advisory Committee on Minority Health, 2009). The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) is committed to increasing the number of diverse student trainees that move on to assume leadership roles in their professional fields. Located in every U.S. state and territory, the AUCD network programs include 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs), and 43 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) programs. The post-training outcomes of these university-based interdisciplinary training programs include becoming leaders in the field, working in an interdisciplinary manner, and working with underserved populations. The UCEDD and LEND programs are well positioned to develop a diverse and culturally competent workforce of professionals skilled in addressing the unique needs of underserved populations, including individuals with disabilities and their families.

AUCD network members recognize that achieving a more diverse interdisciplinary training program requires commitment, persistent efforts, intentional recruitment, and creative thinking. The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, New Jersey's federally designated UCEDD, is one example of a network member successful in recruiting and retaining an increasing number of students and professionals from diverse backgrounds and cultures to become leaders in the field of developmental disabilities through their Traineeship. The Boggs Center Interdisciplinary Traineeship draws on the diverse student body at Rutgers University, its affiliated University. During the 2011-2013 fiscal year, they trained 20 students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Of all their trainees, about 50% were Caucasian, while the remaining 50% were of Black/African-American, Asian, or multiracial background (National Information Reporting System, 2014). This racial diversity rate is one of the highest in the network, which reflects the diversity of Rutgers students and The Boggs Center's efforts to attract and educate a diverse student body. The racial and ethnic profile of the 2013-2014 Rutgers undergraduate enrollment was: 45% White; 27% Asian; 12% Latino; 7% African American; 4% International; and 5% other (Rutgers University, 2014). Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (2014) also report a strong history of recruiting a diverse student body – 21% of the entering class in 2013 came from groups underrepresented in medicine. The Boggs Center is based in the Department of Pediatrics at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

According to Dr. Michael Knox, Associate UCEDD Director, trainee diversity is important to The Boggs Center for several reasons. First, the Center has a responsibility to help to develop a workforce that reflects the population of New Jersey, one of the most diverse states in the nation. Also, faculty and staff gain opportunities to enhance the Center's cultural competence from interactions with trainees from diverse backgrounds. Finally, by attracting a diverse group of trainees, the Center practices the inclusiveness embodied in its mission statement and in the DD Act. The same reasons for the importance of diversity for The Boggs Center apply to our field as a whole (personal communication, September 19, 2014).

About The Boggs Center Traineeship in Developmental Disabilities

The Boggs Center is a UCEDD-only program. This means they have core UCEDD funding, but no additional personnel preparation funding from federal programs such as LEND. One aspect of The Boggs Center is their Interdisciplinary Traineeship, coordinated by Carrie Coffield, PhD, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics. The Boggs Center Interdisciplinary Traineeship is open to undergraduate and graduate students of various disciplines. The traineeship is presented in an independent study format and is similar to an internship or field education opportunity, providing students with a structured learning experience. The Boggs Center Interdisciplinary Traineeship provides students with hands-on experience in a variety of disability-specific projects, and orients its learning opportunities toward developing leadership and vision in the field of developmental disabilities (The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, n.d).

Student trainees must complete a number of requirements, including development of an interdisciplinary training plan with projects and activities as agreed upon between the trainee and Boggs Center mentor, and creating an individualized project in an area of their interest. Additional requirements include the following:

- Complete a joint activity/project with at least one other student trainee.
- Attend various meetings with Boggs Center faculty/staff, trainings, seminars and professional development workshops, including CAC meetings, person-centered approaches training, a day-long disability policy workshop, and monthly didactic sessions/lunch meetings.
- Conduct an interview with a person with a disability, a family member, and a professional working in the field who has some experience or expertise about an issue of interest to the trainee. Also, write a letter to an editor, the congressmen, etc. advocating for a side of the issue they explored through their interviews.
- Visit at least three different settings, including a dinner at a group home, and write summaries of each visit to include some analysis/self-reflection about any issues or questions related to cultural competence that arose during the interviews.
- Visit with people/families living in the community - one visit with an individual with a disability and his/her family to experience what life is like for that individual in his/her community, and one visit to a self-advocacy group meeting - and do a written reflection of each experience.
- Develop a portfolio documenting the traineeship and a culminating presentation to be shared at the graduation ceremony.

The Boggs Center Interdisciplinary Traineeship offers a comprehensive introduction to the field of developmental disabilities and provides the opportunity for student trainees to work with professionals of various disciplines, as well as people with disabilities, families, and community members of different cultures and backgrounds (The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, n.d). In addition to designing a culturally competent and responsive traineeship, The Boggs Center is mindful and intentional with the strategies that they use for recruiting and sustaining trainees to ensure that their program reaches and supports individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Recruitment strategies include:

- Having an inclusive and culturally sensitive brochure which was developed as a joint student project of trainees
- Hosting events and conferences with several different communities in their state
- Establishing a pipeline with the field placement office at the School of Social Work
- Providing an elective for medical school students
- Building relationships with other faculty who can refer students to the program
- Developing a relationship with the Edward J. Bloustein School of Policy & Planning whose students are required to complete an internship
- Co-sponsoring a summer internship program for medical, social work, nursing, and physician assistant students with the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health
- Guest lecturing by Boggs Center faculty in other programs
- Partnering with a chaplaincy program whose students are required to do field placements in community agencies
- Providing a stipend for long-term trainees

Student climate/experiences that support retention include:

- Interviewing interested candidates to discuss program requirements and to determine if the placement is fitting for both the trainee and the program
- Matching each trainee with a Boggs Center mentor who helps to guide the student's activities
- Providing students with an experience where they are made a priority
- Providing regular feedback on student work
- Monitoring student progress on their training plan
- Including trainees in the work and happenings of the Center

- Involving trainees in projects at the Center where they are doing meaningful work
- Providing a graduation ceremony upon successful completion of their traineeship that celebrates the trainees and showcases their contributions
- Having a dedicated staff as the Interdisciplinary Training Program Coordinator that also serves as a support to faculty and staff mentors

Drs. Coffield and Knox believe that the student diversity and high completion rate for their traineeship is partially attributed to the value placed on mentoring and support for students throughout their time at The Boggs Center. Working with students is a valued part of faculty and staff responsibilities; it is exemplified and explicitly supported by the Center's leadership (personal communication, September 19, 2014).

Suggestions for Replication

Strategies of The Boggs Center Interdisciplinary Traineeship that can be replicated by other student training programs to facilitate student success and trainee diversity include:

- Emphasizing cultural competence in program mission and activities
- Building relationships with communities of different cultures
- Recruiting to both undergraduate and graduate students
- Developing a culturally responsive promotional brochure as a joint student project
- Building relationships and establishing a pipeline with the field placement offices of different schools and departments, especially those that require students to do internships
- Guest lecturing in other disciplines and programs
- Co-sponsoring events with community partners and other departments geared toward students
- Recognizing and placing value on the work of the students throughout the traineeship experience
- Encouraging trainee participation in on-campus and community activities
- Encouraging past and current trainees to recommend the program to others
- Partnering with a chaplaincy program to serve as a field placement site
- Intentionally recruiting, interviewing, and preparing students of what is expected of them to ensure appropriate placement
- Allocating financial resources to support long-term trainees
- Providing a mentor to guide the student's activities and offer regular communication and feedback on their work
- Having a coordinator that provides support to the faculty/staff mentors
- Providing a training experience where students are made a priority, doing meaningful work, and are included in UCEDD projects and activities
- Providing a graduation ceremony for successful completion of the traineeship

For More Information

Caroline Coffield, PhD
Instructor of Pediatrics, Interdisciplinary
Training Coordinator

The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities
335 George Street, PO Box 2688; New Brunswick, NJ 08903-2688
Phone: 732-235-9300; Email: carrie.coffield@rutgers.edu
Website: http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/student/interdisciplinary_traineeship.html

RUTGERS
Robert Wood Johnson
Medical School

THE BOGGS CENTER
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

References

1. Administration on Developmental Disabilities. (2009). University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs) minority partnership grants. HHS-2009-ACF-ADD-DD-0096. Retrieved September 10, 2014, from <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=47503>
2. HHS Advisory Committee on Minority Health. (2009). Ensuring that health care reform will meet the needs of minority communities and eliminate health disparities: A statement of principles and recommendations. Retrieved September 24, 2014, from http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/Assets/pdf/Checked/1/ACMH_HealthCareAccessReport.pdf
3. National Information Reporting System. (2014). Trainee diversity [Data report]. Retrieved May 8, 2014, from <https://www.aucd.org/nirs/db/>
4. Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. (2014). Meet our students. Retrieved September 29, 2014, from <http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/education/admissions/index.html>
5. Rutgers University. (2014). We are diverse. Retrieved September 29, 2014, from <http://www.rutgers.edu/about/we-are-diverse>
6. The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities. (n.d.). Boggs Center Interdisciplinary Traineeship. Retrieved September 19, 2014, from http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/student/interdisciplinary_traineeship.html
7. United States Census Bureau. (2012, December 12). U.S. Census Bureau projections show a slower growing, older, more diverse nation a half century from now. Retrieved September 24, 2014, from <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html>



This report was published by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities and funded by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities through technical assistance contract #HHSP23320110016YC. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Administration on Community Living, US Department of Health and Human Services, or the US Government. For more information, visit www.aucd.org/urc.