

Social entrepreneur elective gives students opportunity to be leaders of social change

December 11 2013

Historically, social justice and action for change have been among the nursing profession's core values. However, current curricular content on social entrepreneurship for nurses is not as well developed as the educational programs for students in business, engineering or public policy.

In a new paper, "Principles and Practices of Social Entrepreneurship for Nursing," published in *Journal of Nursing Education*, New York University College of Nursing's Mattia Gilmartin, PhD, RN, Senior Research Scientist and Director of the Center for Continuing Education in Nursing, describes a unique undergraduate honors elective in social entrepreneurship, which connects the [nursing profession](#) to its roots of social innovation and action for change. By incorporating content from business, the humanities and service learning, the course focuses on integrating knowledge and theory into health-related service, social entrepreneur activities, all while working hands-on with a community project.

"Nurses and the nursing profession have a long history of acting as social innovators and entrepreneurs to address the health needs of the frail, vulnerable and marginalized, says Gilmartin. "The ability to build sustainable nurse-led services will be an important skill for the profession to reduce disparities and promote [social progress](#)."

Dr. Gilmartin partnered with NYU Office of Civic Engagement's [Assistant Director] Lisa Kail to assist in implementing the service-

learning component of the course. Service-learning is a common method to promote students' understanding of the environment in nursing and social entrepreneurship education.

"This course is providing highly specialized volunteers to our non-profit neighbors," reports Kail. "All of the placement agencies have long-standing relationships with the university, students and staff members have been volunteering at each site for years. It is especially exciting to bring this added dimension and depth of service to the community. Over the past three semesters students have partnered with organizations that serve homeless individuals, at risk seniors and pre-school children. Non-profit agency representatives work closely with the student corps to develop essential tools that will serve their clients for years to come."

Dr. Gilmartin reports that students responded positively to the integration of the service-learning module. They enjoyed the ability to test their new understanding of change management and social network analysis while working with agency managers to develop realistic community projects. The students served as consultants to the partner organization to gained skills in risk-reduction, health promotion strategy, critical appraisal, teamwork, project management and health system analysis.

"Finding new and creative solutions for poor health is a particular focus for social entrepreneurs and nurses, and the nursing profession can, and should, play a key role in this emerging field of practice, research and education," said Dr. Gilmartin. "Nursing courses that blend content from across academic disciplines, drawing from the humanities, social sciences, and business, will be essential to prepare the new generation of nurses to meet the challenges of health system change. The ability to build sustainable nurse-led services will be an important skill for the profession to reduce disparities and promote social progress."

Provided by New York University

Citation: Social entrepreneur elective gives students opportunity to be leaders of social change (2013, December 11) retrieved 7 May 2024 from

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