Teaching & Fostering Resilience in a Research Enhancement Program for American Indians

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Diné College Educational Component

American Indian Higher Education Consortium
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Resilience

• “Capacity of individuals to *navigate* their way to the psychological, social, cultural and physical resources that sustain their well being, and their capacity individually and collectively to *negotiate* for those resources...in culturally meaningful ways” (Ungar, 2008, p.225)

• Indicates use of community strength/asset approach in public health

• In American Indian communities, associated with:
  – stronger cultural identity
  – connectedness
  – social support
  – education
  (Montgomery, et al.,2000)

• Can be considered at the individual, family or community level (Ungar, 2011, p.1.)
Resilience Elements in Summer Program

Students

• Identity – within culture, within community
• Support – from peers, family, community, faculty/staff
• Self-confidence, self-efficacy – from succeeding in mastering difficult material, meeting expectations of mentor, community, faculty, peers

Community

• Connectedness – student contact with community through work in community health care setting
• Student contributions – bringing their skills and education to bear on community issues
• Interactions among student, community health staff, college/university faculty nurture evidence-based approaches
Summer Research Enhancement Program in Public Health & Health Research – Culturally-based

- **Nitsáhákees**
  - Learning concepts in the classroom
- **Nahat’á**
  - Group work and project
- **Iiná**
  - Practicum in the community
- **Siihasin**
  - Final presentation

**Nitsáhákees**
Thinking

**Siihasin**
Final synthesis of knowledge

**Iiná**
Living-implementing

**Nahat’á**
Planning
Nitsáhákees: Research Methods Course

Topics covered include:

• Native American health and illness concepts, including resilience approaches
• Basic Epidemiology & Determinants of Health
• Health Promotion and Disease Prevention in Communities
• Cancer, Diabetes, other chronic illness diagnosis and management
• Nutrition & Physical Activity
• Data Collection & Statistics
• Ethics and Research Methods
• Community-based approaches
Nahat’á: Team Project on Community Planning

Students are divided into teams and are responsible for describing/assessing a community and planning a health promotion “intervention.”

- Community description – demographics
- Health background of community members
- Health facilities available
- Community assets
- Assess health problems and propose an intervention
- Describe goals, objectives and activities for program intervention
- Evaluation of proposed plan
- Presentation that includes literature references
Team Community Projects – Past Examples

• **Three Generations Affected by Onset Diabetes in Navajo Mountain, UT**
  - A ‘whole community’ approach to this remote, traditional community to transport elderly to healthy lifestyle activities, to increase activity levels in children, and to promote awareness of risk factors among adults.

• **Nits’íís hózhó’go ba ádahólyá: Colorectal Cancer in Tuba City**
  - A project to increase colorectal cancer awareness and screening, and to implement a lifestyle change intervention among adults in Tuba City.

• **Youth Against Diabetes: A Pilot Intervention in Crownpoint**
  - A school-based intervention to implement nutrition classes, increased physical education time, and conduct regular glucose monitoring in youth.
Practicum – Student Placement Sites – Examples

- NNMC Diabetes Education Program
- NNMC Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program
- Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Project
- Davita Dialysis Clinic
- Navajo Nation CHR Program
- John Hopkins Together on Diabetes Project
- Navajo Nation EPA/Air quality program
- Navajo Nation Department of Health
Sihasin: Analysis and Final Preparation for Class Presentation

- Classroom instruction on Data Analysis
- Students interpret data collected from their practicum site and develop a power point presentation
- Students share practicum experience
- Present to their mentors, family, peers
Student Accomplishments in Community Settings – Examples

• Became a team member with the John Hopkins Together on Diabetes project, collected and analyzed a subset of data regarding youth knowledge of healthy food choices and gardening.

• Worked with the Navajo Special Diabetes Program, re-administered an agency survey comparing the use of services in two communities.

• Assisted with a retrospective chart analysis of the impact of a health education program and the impact of clients follow-up on Hgb A1C results.

• Assisted and analyzed data collected with a Special Diabetes youth camp to analyze the understanding of diet and exercise on the impact of preventing diabetes.
Student Evaluation Comments Reflecting Aspects of Resilience

Change in Individual Identity

• I gained social skills and communication skills because I was not open to speaking my mind. Now I am more open minded.

• I am stronger, faster, healthier, and more at peace mentally physically and spiritually.

• ...including our traditional ceremony that was involved before the program started that to me was very touching because we set a protection prayer to start out the program right, with no accidents, negatives that may come our way through out the program.

Did the practicum component of the SREP meet your expectations?
• 9, strongly agree
• 1, agree
• 1, disagree
Student Comments Reflecting Increased Identity with Community

- Think it was good to experience from a patient point of view on diabetes care (self-monitor blood glucose) and get an idea of real-life barriers that one may experience.

- I learned that making a difference in Native communities is easier since I am a part of the solution.

- I have developed a relationship with participants.

- The fact that I was able to network so much, so when I return to the Navajo Reservation, I know what opportunities are there and will have an established rapport with them.

Teambuilding Exercise
“Together we can Prevent Cancer & Diabetes!”
Student Comments Reflecting Improved Support

• I wouldn’t trade this experience for anything because it taught me what to expect when I start my career and allows me to see what I may be able to do to make improvements.

• The highlights for me were the varieties of professionals in different fields who were willing to share with us their experiences and encouragements to continue to make positive changes in our communities.

• It gave me a challenge and I overcame that obstacle. It was a confidence booster for me and made me prepared for professional research and presentation.
Comments Reflecting Change in Community Setting

- Our program gained valuable, fresh ideas from the interns and renewed enthusiasm. Many of us have been working on the projects for several months and teaching the interns about what we do reignited our enthusiasm for our work. Having the extra help was also very much appreciated.

- The [student] had a lot of questions about the program, the data being collected and some information I felt we needed to re-vamp based on some of her recommendations. Sometimes the data we see day after day all becomes similar but the way she was able to analyze gave insight.

- I am learning to see the way our people can adapt to changes and make the most of what they have.
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References


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Presenters Represent Support from Role Models

[Image]

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2013 Program Statistics

- **12 student participants**
  - 7 female
  - 5 male

- **Tribal Affiliation**
  - Navajo

- **College Representation**
  - Diné College, Fort Lewis College, NMSU, NAU, ASU, Utah Valley U.
Program Statistics

1999 – 2014 Overall Program Statistics

• 179 students have participated in the program
  – 10 different Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU)
  – 23 non-TCU Institutions
  – 23 Tribes

2014 Program Statistics

• 15 students participants
• 10 female
• 5 male
• Affiliation
  Navajo Tribe, Tohono O’odham, Zuni
• College Representation
  Diné College, NMSU, ASU, Tohono O’odham Community College, UNM, Columbia University, Utah Valley University, San Juan College, ENMU