

Student Diversity Focus Group – Fall 2018

9.13.2018

Objectives

1. Determine student understanding of concepts related to diversity, cultural competence, and inclusion.
2. Develop student definitions of these concepts.
3. Identify evidence of how the MPH program puts these concepts into practice.
4. Identify resources, tools, and other benefits that would be of student interest for the MPH program to provide.

Identifying Concepts

*Aspects of **Diversity** identified included:* backgrounds, culture, race/ethnicity, differences, age, income status, gender, religion, disability status, education, language, dress, food, work environments (i.e., how they shape social norms)

***Diversity** themes included:*

- Inherent factors (race/ethnicity, age, gender, language)
- Cultural influence (backgrounds, culture, education, language, dress, food)

*Shared definition of **Diversity**:* “The variety of culturally and environmentally influenced differences that exist across populations, sometimes by choice.”

*Aspects of **Cultural Competence** identified included:* respect, awareness, understanding, adjustability, tolerance, body language, interactions, hierarchy (i.e. understanding how social norms influencing behavioral interactions), education (i.e., provision of tools, raising awareness), tension, taboo (i.e. social rule about what is acceptable behavioral interaction)

***Cultural Competence** themes included:*

- Emotional empathy/sympathy (respect, awareness, understanding)
- Communication (tolerance, body language, interactions, tension)

*Shared definition of **Cultural Competence**:* “Learning from verbal and non-verbal communications to develop emotional sympathy and/or empathy toward other cultures via introspective insight and development.”

*Aspects of **Inclusion** identified included:* removing barriers, acceptance, togetherness, awareness of different cultures, caring, welcoming environment, tolerance, diversity of cultures, disclosure/transparency

***Inclusion** themes included:* N/A

*Shared definition of **Inclusion**:* “Creating a facilitative, open environment that promotes awareness of diversity amongst individuals and transparency between individuals.”

In what ways has the MPH program demonstrated the concepts of diversity, cultural competence, and inclusion?

- Notifies students of events, especially those promoting diversity (including conferences, which are often subsidized)
- Inter-departmental collaboration
- Awareness of international opportunities with a cultural component
- Students with diverse cultural backgrounds and professional interests work together in classes
- Students are encouraged, in a non-confrontational manner, to share their cultural perspectives in classes to enrich learning
- These concepts seem explicit to within course syllabi
- Diverse (i.e., international culture, research interests, etc.) professors are employed across departments
- Student input is sought for program improvement (like this focus group)

What resources would students like the MPH program to provide?

- Scholarships – for program tuition, more assistantships, and connected to medical school
- Emphasize all programs within course instruction
 - *Facilitator observation: It seems that food safety majors feel “left out”*
- Access to library – card access is a barrier to some students
- Access to universally designed, accessible learning environments
 - *Facilitator observation: one student shared about his disability and how the physical environment inhibited his learning*
- Inter-program lecture series, touching on both traditional and non-traditional public health related topics
- Allow students’ experiences to influence course materials
 - *Facilitator observation: one student shared that he felt greatly enriched by an international student’s experience and the interpretation to public health concepts*
- Medical program expansion and support (i.e. create more pathways to employment and community practice)

Finish this sentence: When I entered the program, I wish I would’ve known...

...more about the APE.

...that there were more events/opportunities to meet students.

...sooner that the program material and process is not intimidating or unfairly challenging.

...I needed to find my own project advisors.

...that I could take a lot of my courses online.

...about ONE HEALTH and how each of the classes we take influences it.

...that students can gain research grant from an advisor’s department.

...more information about the assistantships.

...more concrete field experience support/examples/methods.

...that it would be difficult to get an internship with the FDA.