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Author: Trupiano Nicole; Lau Tommy; Gururaj Anirudh
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Restructuring Interprofessional Education: A Student-Driven Strategic Plan

Nicole Trupiano

Third-year medical student, University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, Michigan; email: niktrup@med.umich.edu; Twitter: @NikkiTrupiano; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0657-9098.

Tommy Lau

Second-year dental student, University of Michigan School of Dentistry, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Anirudh Gururaj

Second-year medical student, University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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To the Editor: Research has consistently shown that interprofessional education (IPE) improves patient-centered care and outcomes.\textsuperscript{1-3} Specifically, newer research has identified that student leadership in IPE leads to improved participation among peers and enhances sustainability, thus leading to improved interprofessional education overall.\textsuperscript{4}

The IPE Student Advisory Committee (SAC) is a student-run committee that serves as a collaborative community for all the health professional schools and officially recognized IPE organizations at the University of Michigan. For the 2020–2021 academic year, the SAC cochairs determined there was a need to improve the IPE experience, increase student engagement, and improve communication. The SAC aimed to improve 3 priority areas: structure, education, and wellness.

For structure, the committee hoped to add an additional cochair and divide the cochairs into different priority areas. The cochairs created an IPE representative program in which students who were passionate about IPE were selected from each health school to serve as members of SAC and act as liaisons between SAC, their school, and the other health professional schools. SAC successfully recruited 12 student representatives who have seen support for their IPE endeavors grow. They now have plans to expand courses, increase funding, and improve interprofessional opportunities for their fellow students.

For education, students wanted to see more experiential-based learning, so a workgroup of faculty and SAC cochairs worked to create a new IPE experience—the Longitudinal Interprofessional Family-Based Experience (LIFE). LIFE connected interdisciplinary student teams with patients and families managing chronic illnesses. It launched this past semester with positive feedback from participants who hope to continue.
For wellness, the SAC cochairs partnered with a representative from the University of Michigan Wellness Office and convened a Wellness Task Force that works directly with the Wellness Office representative to improve communication about different wellness offerings. Organizational change can be a difficult undertaking, but it is especially crucial to execute well when working within interprofessional teams. As a fairly new organization that serves as a role model for IPE excellence, SAC had the opportunity to revolutionize how interprofessional organizations function and achieve goals to improve the interprofessional experience for all students at the University of Michigan. The cochairs aim to share their implementation of structure-based initiatives in hopes that other medical training programs can follow. They want to educate fellow medical trainees on different ways they can have an impact on their institutions’ IPE programming.

References

