

Getting HIP in Higher Education: Using High Impact Practices When Teaching

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Some of us in the addiction profession are educators in institutions of higher education such as colleges and universities. We develop, teach, and revise courses on such topics as fundamentals of alcohol and other drugs, families, counseling, prevention, and cultural competency. Others are students in undergraduate or graduate programs who are preparing for careers as addiction professionals or people interested in continuing their higher education and looking into college and university-level addiction studies programs. Whatever your role or interest in higher addiction studies education, it is good to be HIP!

HIP, or High Impact [Educational] Practices, include first-year seminars and experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning/community based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects. HIPs have been shown to increase rates of student retention and engagement. Further, students from underserved

populations tend to perform better in school when engaged in HIPs. (Kuh, 2008, p. 14)

First-year seminars and experiences for students majoring or concentrating in addiction studies include an emphasis on “critical thinking, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies.” (Kuh, 2008, p. 9) Such a seminar or experience could be invaluable for first-year students to allow them to engage in learning about the fundamentals of alcohol and other drugs. The seminar or experience could ask students, in small groups, to explore a myth they heard about alcohol and other drugs by using peer-reviewed, scholarly literature. This allows students to actively participate in finding accurate, research-based information to prove or disprove their theories and will involve the students in critical thinking, information literacy, and collaborative learning!

The use of learning communities is another HIP. Generally known as living and learning communities (LLCs), these communities offer “a variety



of opportunities for students to pursue their academic and social goals in a safe, supportive and dynamic environment.” (Keene State College, 2016, para. 1) Colleges and universities should consider creating a LLC devoted to addiction or prevention of alcohol and other drug use disorders!

Another HIP is to offer writing intensive courses throughout the curriculum. Writing intensive courses in addiction studies can include the use of case studies, theory application papers, and research papers. In one class that I teach, I have students watch a video of a case study. After studying the theories of addiction, they “diagnose” the main character using the DSM 5 criteria and apply the theories to the case study in a paper. This practice offers students an opportunity to diagnose and use the addiction theories, organize their thoughts, and to express what they have learned through writing.

Collaborative assignments and projects provide students with an opportunity to use team work skills. Assignment and projects involve study groups within courses, team-based assignments and writing, and cooperative projects and research. (Kuh, 2008, p. 10) In one of my courses, I have students study a drug independently and then work in teams based upon the category of drug (e.g. opiates, psychedelics). After discussing the similarities and differences among the drugs in a group, the students post their findings, allowing their information to become public and viewed by other classes in that classroom.

Undergraduate research involves inviting students to engage in faculty research. For example, we facilitated an Appreciative Inquiry study that required our students to take leadership roles in conducting the Appreciative Inquiry groups. Through this process, the students learned about Appreciative Inquiry, how to conduct the necessary group, and the general research process.

Diversity/global learning “helps students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own.” (Kuh, 2008, p. 10) Many students take a class about counseling culturally diverse patients. In the counseling diversity portion of our Advanced Treatment class, students research a culturally diverse group and provide a PowerPoint presentation to their class. Additionally, this class can also incorporate community involvement with diverse groups of people, which can encourage students to help people with diverse backgrounds in their community.

Resources

More information on HIPs can be found at the Association of American Colleges and Universities: www.aacu.org/resources/high-impact-practices

Information related to course development at: <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/TAP-21-Addiction-Counseling-Competencies/SMA15-4171>

National Addiction Studies Accreditation Commission:
<https://nasacaccreditation.org>

International Coalition of Addiction Studies Education (INCASE):
www.incase.org

Service learning and community-based projects provide students with direct experience in the field and profession. According to the National Service Learning Clearinghouse, it is “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” (Generator School Network, 2016, para. 1) Community-based projects are “undertaken by departments and/or faculty and students in collaboration with community organizations that respond to community-identified needs and promote civic engagement.” (University of Miami, 2016, para. 1) This type of project can involve activities in homeless shelters, building projects, and prevention activities.

Internships are generally one of the final experiences of most academic addiction programs. Internships provide direct experience in a work setting and provide students with supervision from and direct contact with other professionals. (Kuh, 2008) It is important to have a course/class that partners with the internship so that students gain professional and academic information from the college/university while also gaining supervision and training workshops through their internships.

The last of the HIPs is capstone classes or projects. These classes or programs commonly take place at the end of the academic experience. (Kuh, 2008, p. 11) At my college, students enroll in a capstone course that will allow them to thoroughly study a topic that they have wanted to explore in greater depth than through their general courses.

Recognizing and incorporating HIPS into our academic addiction programs is important to strengthen the skills of those vital new professionals entering the addiction workforce and strengthen the addiction profession overall.

Whether developing or revising a new addictions program, searching for an undergraduate or graduate program, or wanting to improve retention and engagement rates, be HIP!

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