

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

Interdisciplinary Exploration of Alaska's Critical Behavioral Health Issues

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BACKGROUND

In 2013, with funding from the University of Alaska Anchorage College of Health's Interdisciplinary Education Award, the Departments of Psychology, Health Sciences, and Human Services; the Schools of Social Work and Nursing; the Center for Human Development; and the Justice Center collaborated in the design, development, and instruction of a new interdisciplinary course.

The interdisciplinary faculty aimed to expand a one-credit course offered in 2012 to a three-credit upper division undergraduate/graduate course. Following approval by the COH Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Academic Board, a permanent course number was obtained.

METHODS

It was unprecedented work to develop a course involving multiple units within the College of Health and College of Arts and Sciences. Interdisciplinary faculty faced the following challenges:

- All around lack of familiarity with cross-listing a course between colleges and multiple academic units.
- The curriculum handbook did not offer details for developing a step-by-step process incorporating multiple academic units and colleges.
- The time frame to complete the curriculum review process was much longer than anticipated.

COURSE DELIVERY

- Academic units of the interdisciplinary faculty actively disseminated information about the course.
- Class was presented during the first five week summer session on Saturdays at the Center for Human Development.
- In class didactic content included presentations from content experts practicing in Alaska.
- Learning activities included case studies, role plays, and active learning activities followed by interdisciplinary discussions/reflections.

TOPICAL CONTENT

- Interdisciplinary approach and practice
- Social determinants of health
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and trauma-informed services
- Domestic violence/sexual assault
- Suicide
- Mental Health First Aid
- Substance abuse

"I Liked gaining the perspective of the interdisciplinary team"

PURPOSE

The course is designed to engage students in an in-depth, interdisciplinary exploration of Alaska's critical behavioral health issues, including domestic violence and sexual assault, substance abuse, mental health, and suicide.

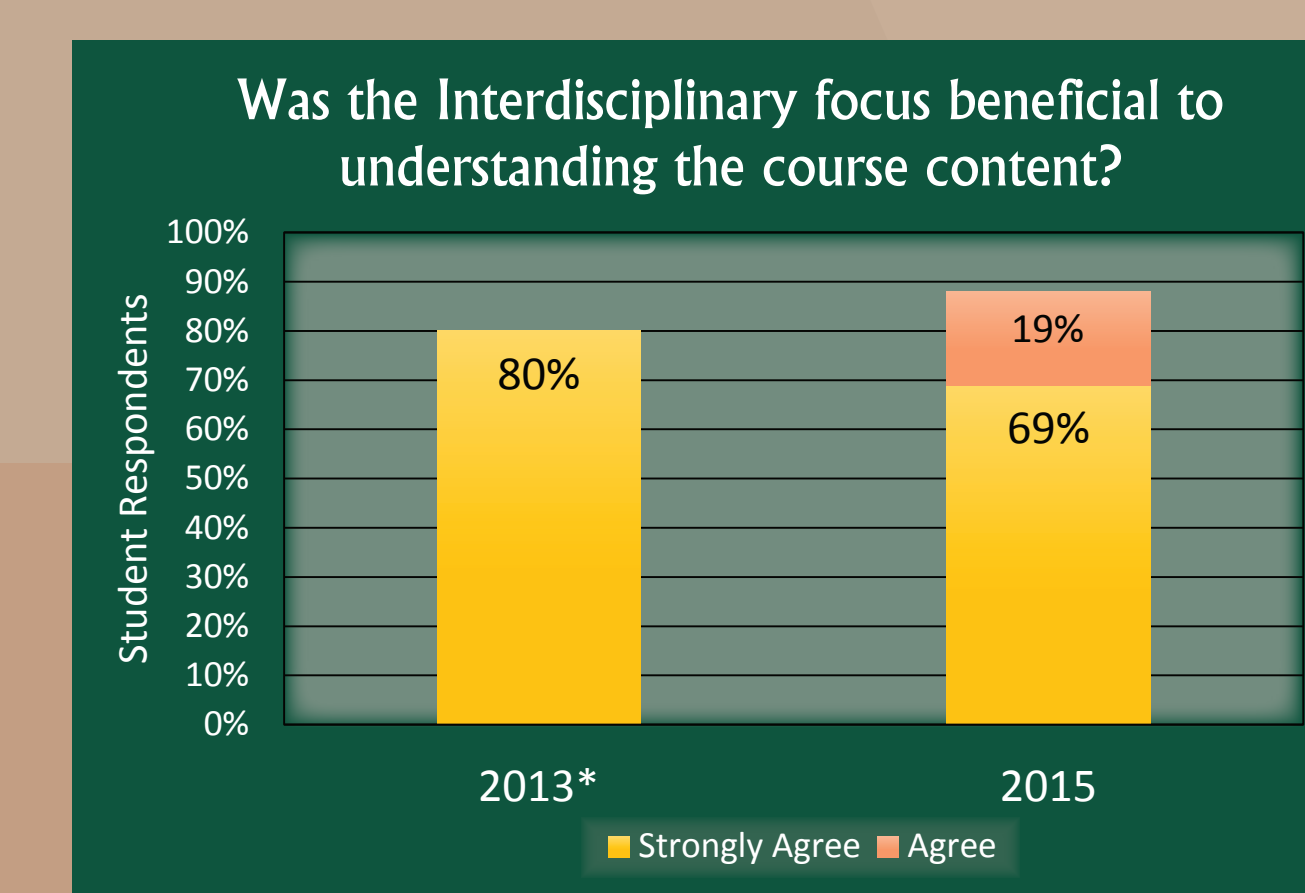


"Course material so closely aligned with my interest in behavioral health"

STUDENT EVALUATIONS

IN-CLASS EVALUATIONS	
Did the course meet your expectations and would you recommend offering the course again? (2013)	80% Strongly Agreed
Was the interdisciplinary focus beneficial to your understanding of the course content? (2015)	81% Strongly Agreed

Standardized student evaluations: 4.5 on a scale of 5.0



*No data available for "Agree."

Student Characteristics:

- Students were a mix of undergraduate and graduate students.
- Students represented the following disciplines:
2013 students - **justice, social work, psychology, and public health.**
2014 students - **behavioral health, nursing, sociology, justice, psychology, business, and public health.**
2015 students - **dental, business administration, and nursing.**

"The interactive approach and the training is invaluable to us as future professionals"

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Broaden student participation from additional academic units to strengthen an interdisciplinary focus in the health professions.
- Promote new interdisciplinary academic experiences for students planning to practice in Alaska.