

INTRODUCTION

The Human Development Institute has a family mentorship program where we match individual students with a family of a child or adolescent with a significant disability, so that they can learn first-hand from the family's perspective.

Two of the learning outcomes for the family mentorship program are:

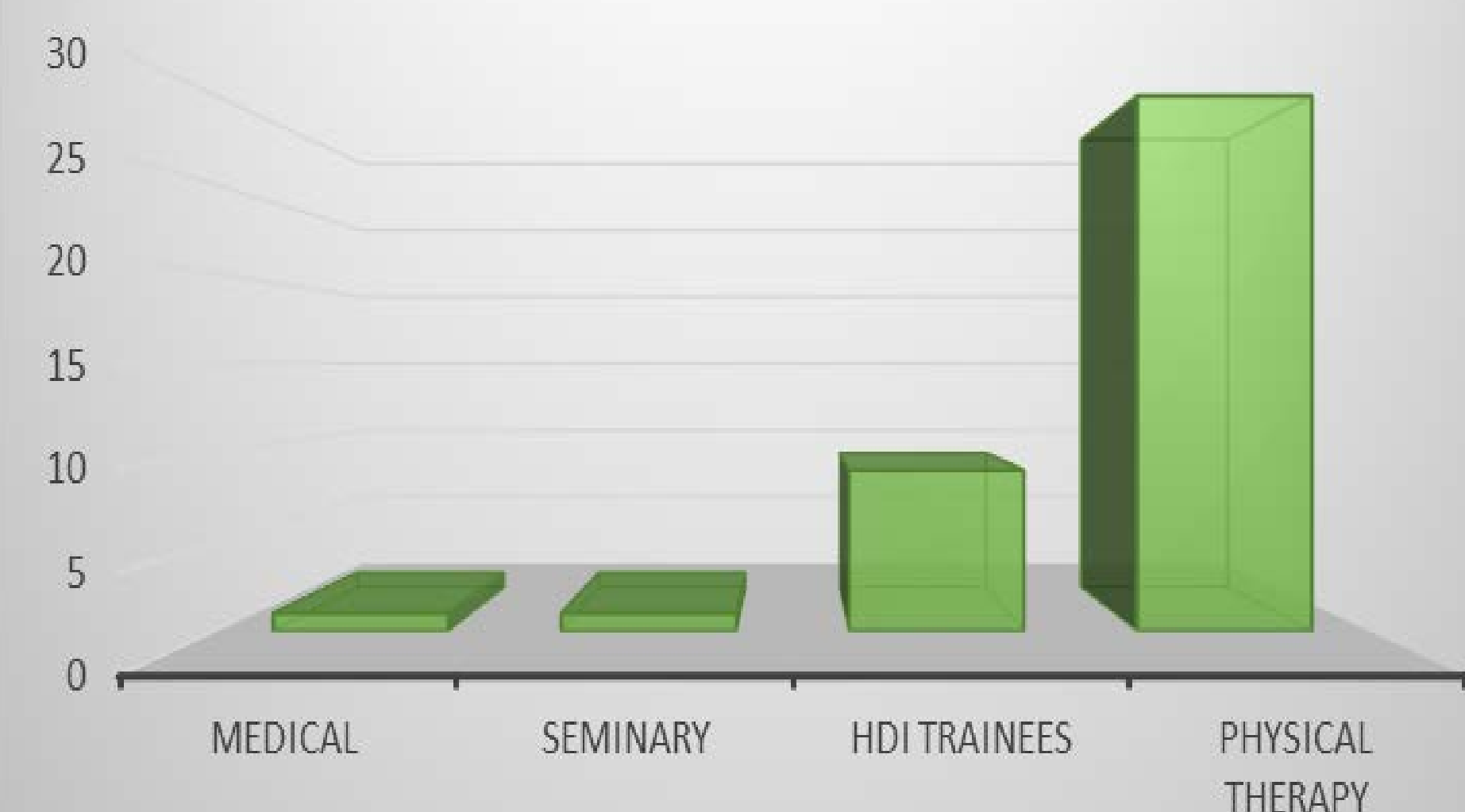
1. To enhance students' understanding of what it is like to have a child, adolescent or family member with a developmental disability, as well as the family dynamics when a member of the family is an individual with a disability;
2. To increase students' understanding of their personal biases and perceptions regarding individuals with disabilities.

Learning outcomes underlying the family mentorship program (Adapted from Kleinert et al., 2010)

CURRENT STATISTICS

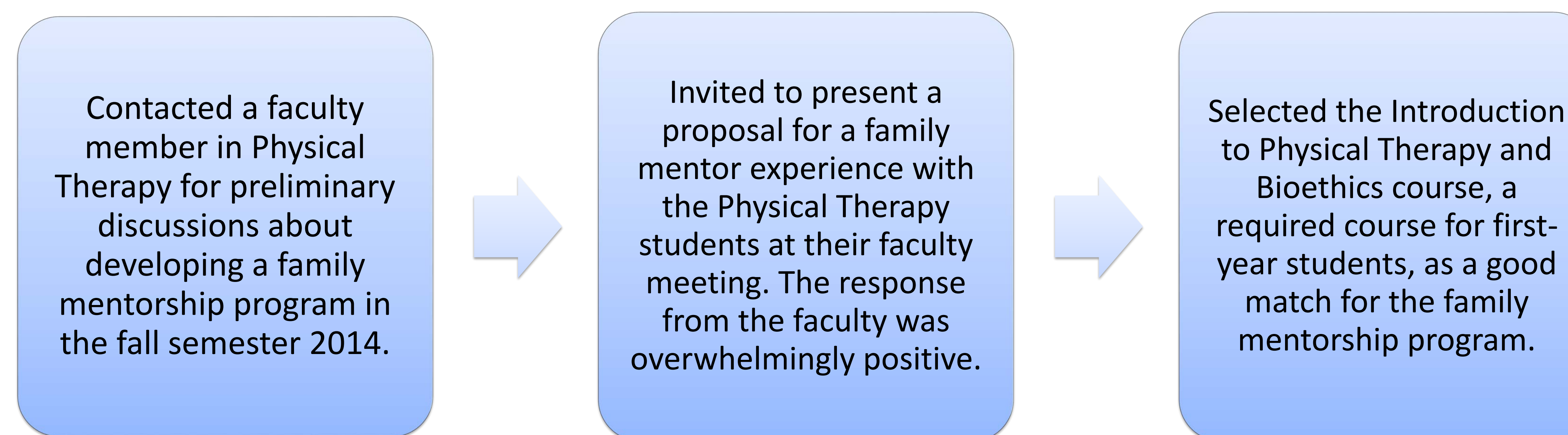
For the 2014-2015 academic year, 30 Physical Therapy, 9 HDI trainees, 1 seminary, and 1 medical student participated in the family mentorship program.

Number of students participating in Family Mentorship program



METHODS

The preservice training coordinator provided the name and contact information for each mentor family willing to share their personal stories and perspectives with the students. The student is responsible for the initial contact with the family and for setting up two meeting times with their mentor family – this usually includes an introductory visit with the family and a visit with the family in the community. The process of partnering the family mentorship program with students and faculty in Physical Therapy is shown below.



RESULTS

During the last two weeks of the fall 2014 semester, students made a 25 minute in-class presentation describing their family mentor experience followed by a question and answer session. The student presentations included an assessment of potential safety hazards in the home environment and recommendations (i.e., using a shower chair for bathing, adding a handrail to the stairs) to increase accessibility in the home. The students also further developed their interviewing skills – a valuable skill set that will improve their work as future professionals and clinicians. Two quotes from students are listed below.

One student wrote, "I appreciated their [parents of a family member with a disability] desire to educate us on the ins and outs of Autism Spectrum Disorder in order to improve the understanding of the healthcare provider's approach."

Another student had this to say, "Overall, this experience is one that I will not forget! I will use what I have learned as a future physical therapist to make a difference in other's lives through understanding, knowledge and compassion."

PARTICIPANTS

Mentor families were recruited through the University Center for Excellence Consumer Advisory Council and local advocacy organizations, including the Down Syndrome Association of Central Kentucky, Spina Bifida Association of Kentucky, and the Autism Society of the Bluegrass.



REFERENCE

Kleinert, H.L., Sharrad, D., Vallance, M., Ricketts, E., & Farley, J. (2010). Teaching Seminary Students About Faith Inclusion for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities: The Role of Family Mentorships. *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health*, 14, 6-27.

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