

## **BUILDING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' TECHNOLOGY SKILLS TO ADDRESS GLOBAL HEALTH ISSUES**

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*This paper discusses how student learning was enhanced by moving from the traditional pedagogy used in academic settings to integrative teaching supported by various disciplines, and specifically how the use of technology in the university classroom was used to help students realize that issues occurring globally directly related to local health concerns, and furthermore that by using the internet students could have an impact influencing and shaping issues around the world.*

Many in the academic setting are fully aware that in order for students to achieve at higher learning levels, the didactic lecture style that most of us experienced is not the best format to engage and enhance student achievement. Having students grasp international issues, and come away with a change in perspective where things that happen globally have an impact on all of us, and are not just an issue happening somewhere else, is one of the hardest concepts to impart. While having the opportunity to teach an international health class, I found that many students still left the course with a 'how tragic' viewpoint of what was occurring in other countries, but that it was not directly impacting on their world, so they then left the course and continued on in their educational endeavors, not giving it much more than a second thought. Furthermore besides providing aid, most did not see that what they will do while working in the health fields in this country will greatly impact the outcomes occurring elsewhere. Thus this past academic year, I decided to try and shift the class from an international health concept to an applied global health perspective, building on modern technology and the use of the internet, to actively connect students to issues in the world and to have students create educational websites that could be used and seen by others globally that addressed health concerns and disparities in various countries around the globe.

The goal was to have students short of going abroad and actually seeing for themselves the health issues faced in various regions of the world, make educational web pages that provided current examples dealing with the health issues for the country of their choice. During the course of the semester students would then not only become experts on the health issues in the country they chose, but they would be responsible for advancing their own technological skills for the future workforce, by creating web pages with the assistance of student technical support services. Students were empowered with another way of presenting their material to an audience, a valuable skill in the workplace. In addition, they were also be responsible for educating the rest of their class on specific health issues in their region and how their country was being impacted by the WHO and the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000, with an attainment date of 2015 (WHO, 2005).

At the beginning of the semester students were randomly assigned into groups. These groups then identified one developing country they wished to study, and become 'experts' on. The groups had several criteria they had to meet during the process and topics that had to be addressed including the following: leading causes of morbidity & mortality, the impact the major illnesses have on their country financially and developmentally, what was currently being done to address these needs, possible ways to fully reach the needs and health concerns that are not being met in that country, the use of primary and secondary prevention, examples of their typical health care facilities and providers, what health care typically costs for them and put that in relative terms to income, and visual support for all the above criteria – using photos, interviews, original art and tables/graphics, with a minimum of seven distinct but linked web pages that dealt with each of the fore mentioned topics, using proper browser buttons to make the website navigable, flash video, and any other type of enhancement that would add to the content & dissemination of information at the website.

To make sure this project was completed and carried on throughout the semester certain criteria had to be turned in at certain points during the semester, and a minimum of one class per month was designated to the media project time, with student technical support services providing instructional assistance with the software applications. At the onset of the project, Student Software Support Services was contacted and it was arranged for them to come to the classroom and demonstrate software applications available for use on the project. For this project, the applications demonstrated were Microsoft's FrontPage and Windows MovieMaker, although they were not limited

to these two applications. The students were able to select between making a website or making a movie. A schedule was set so that once a month the Software Support Staff would come to the classroom and provide graduated instruction compatible with the project timeline prior to a timeline due date. Our technical support department's (officially named The HUB) mission is to assist students with using technology in their educations. They are not strictly a "help desk" but a true technology center where students can go for technical and instructional support on their laptops.

As a result of this project, students not only were engaged but found the challenge of adding a new technical skill (building web pages and capturing/making movies) to be a positive experience that they would apply and use in the future. Students were able to clearly present and discuss how on a global basis, local choices through not only economic policy, but other realms as well, made in one area of the world affects health outcomes universally. In addition, when reviewing comments from students on the class it was determined that student perspectives did change, and they see themselves as active participants in the world, by having actively taken ownership of this 'classroom' activity. As one student shared, "I gained (sic) a sense of urgency involving healthcare internationally. Personally, it made me change the way I look at the news.... I am no longer a bystander."

### Notes:

1. The Millennium Development Goals were established in conjunction with 189 countries, to establish parameters and guidelines dealing with health issues, health infrastructure, and measurable health outcomes for all regions of the world by the year 2015.
2. An example of one group project focusing on the health issue in Sierra Leone can be viewed at <http://web.mac.com/erbl/iWeb/Site/Welcome.html>

### References:

World Health Organization, 2005. *MDG: Health and the Millennium Development Goals*, Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Press.

### Biographical Sketches for Panel Presentation:

Heather L Harvey, DrPH:

Dr. Heather Harvey received her Masters from the University of Tennessee and her Doctorate in Public Health from the University of South Carolina. She has served on the faculty at the University of North Carolina- Charlotte, Columbus State University, Mercer University School of Medicine & is currently an Assistant Professor in Health Care Management at Clayton State University.

Joyce Sandusky:

Joyce Sandusky is a program coordinator, technical, in the Client Services division of the Office of Information & Telecommunications Services of Clayton State University. Joyce was a co-author of the Spirit training program, which incorporated customer service training into the technical training for employees of the HUB at CSU. She manages the Student Software Support Services location of the HUB and coordinates software training for students. Joyce received an associates degree in networking technology and a bachelors degree in Technology Management from Clayton State University

Elester Bostick-Latham:

Elester R. Bostick-Latham received his Associate of Science from Georgia Perimeter College. He is currently a senior, at Clayton State University, and is a Deans List student involved with many organizations on campus such as Sigma Pi Fraternity, American Humanics, as well as the Clayton State Wind Ensemble. He is currently an Admissions Specialist for South Fulton Medical Center. He is also involved with Beulah Baptist Church, where he has helped to establish an outreach ministry particularly focused on healthcare promotion for at risk teenagers and young adults.

Tanisha Williams:

Tanisha Kaela Williams is currently a senior at Clayton State University pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Care Management. Currently, she is an intern at Southern Regional Hospital and plans to further her career within Human Resources. She enjoys volunteering in the food ministry at her church as well assisting seniors with various activities.

Lacy Wilson

Barbara Lacy Wilson received her Associate of Arts in Chemistry from Georgia Perimeter College and is currently a senior at Clayton State University pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Health Care Management. She is an employee of Blackpowder Products, Inc. as the Senior Sales Executive Administrator who enjoys tutoring in science and mathematics and volunteering with AID Atlanta.