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International Cooperation in Indirect Service

Sabrina Salvant, Debra Tupe

Columbia University, NY, NY, United States

This innovative academic program was developed to provide graduate students with the preliminary skills to engage in community based program development/evaluation and grantsmanship through international alliances within an indirect service model. A unique feature of this program is the opportunity for students to develop and evaluate international projects that support the needs of global partners. This course aims: to broaden the scope of OT practice through the exploration of opportunities as reflected in health, social , cultural and economic and global trends; to identify resources, organizations and funding sources that support non-traditional program development; to introduce students to the process of community needs assessment, program design and proposal development; and, to identify an occupational therapy skill set that is transferable to non-traditional, and emerging practice settings. Description/Report: this one year course provides students with the skills to participate at population and societal levels of policy development and grantsmanship.

Emphasis is placed on the OT as a consultant, performing community needs assessment, designing occupation based community programs, developing programmatic aims and objectives, and identifying potential organizations for partnering and funding. Students are required to identify emerging practice areas and innovative service delivery models, actively engage in discussion of seminar topics, work collaboratively with partners, and develop a well-supported grant proposal.

Results/Discussion: The indirect course was originated to provide OT graduate students with the skills to position themselves in changing health care, economic, political and social environments. As the course developed over 7 years there was an interest and a need for the integration of an international component. Students partnered with international non for profit organizations in Cuba, Trinidad, Nicaragua and Rwanda. Examples of student developed programs included a rehab for post combatants and ergonomic adaptations for basket weavers. Technology supported this effort with the use of skype, email, and e-journaling. Conclusion: This innovative method is effective in providing students with exposure to international collaborative projects and enhancing their understanding of the cultural aspects of program development. This program contributes to the profession by encouraging students to work internationally and to apply the knowledge to local low resource communities.