

Sacred Heart University

From the Selected Works of Donna M. Bowers

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A total of 63 SHU graduate students, organized into 13 teams, concluded the fall semester by presenting their service learning clinical project work in the form of poster sessions. The students are all doctor of physical therapy candidates, and the posters showcased their efforts to develop health promotion or quality improvement programs at select community-based facilities, including physical therapy clinics, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and adult day care agencies.

The doctor of physical therapy program is offered through SHU's College of Health Professions, and the course was led by Clinical Associate Professor Donna Bowers. "The thing that makes these projects unique is that it's 100 percent community based, with 12-14 areas of opportunity," said Bowers. "Our students are pretty high caliber already, but this expands their role from one-on-one patient interaction to developing programs for groups of individuals or organizations."

One presenting group's project was titled "Say YES to Healthiness: Nutrition and Wellness Program" and was developed for Mercy Learning Center (MLC) in Bridgeport. "We were interested in a nutritional and exercise development program for the ESL class there," said team member Kate Gallagher. "We all studied those areas for our undergraduate degrees, which is unique to our group."

Gallagher explained that MLC has a complex curriculum, and it was unable to emphasize those areas, so the team targeted a group of 24 women with nutrition education, exercise and sharing of community resources. "We made it easy for them to be ambassadors to bring that information back to their own families," Gallagher noted.

A second presenting group's project was "Griffin Hospital: Implementation of Work Hardening Program," which was developed for the Rehabilitation department of Griffin Hospital in Derby. Team members

shared a common background in biomechanics, kinesiology and exercise physiology, and Griffin needed a work hardening program to provide a transition between acute care and a successful return to work—in short, physical and psychological therapy tailored to specific job functions.

“Griffin gets a lot of clients with work-related injuries and currently provides them pain control, return-to-function and range-of-motion therapy,” said team member Sam Sheppard. “It was not specific to jobs, which is where the project team came in. We did a feasibility study, implementation plan and cost analysis for creating a space and program to facilitate that.”

“They took a very broad concept, gave us facts and figures and made it realistic for us to attain,” said Sara Rawan, the onsite contact at Griffin.

A third group’s project was titled “Operation TheraVid: Increasing Therapist Efficiency Utilizing HEP Templates” and was developed for outpatient clinic Rehab Concepts Physical Therapy in Guilford. TheraVid is the online home of the clinic’s exercise program, through which patients can access therapy routines to meet their specific needs.

“We evaluated the program, looking at the most common pathologies for the clinic’s patients, who have mostly orthopedic needs, and we made recommendations to the physical therapy staff,” said team member Brianna Sullivan.

The recommendations were well received, according to onsite project coordinator Amy Williams. “The group was awesome. They did a ton of research, and they really streamlined our process for giving out exercise programs to our patients,” she said.