

Student Engagement Fund Final Reflection

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Palliative Care Training for Direct Care Workers

My time spent working with both Dr. Kim and Dr. Gray through the student engagement fund has been extremely valuable and eye opening for me. Before beginning my work, I had very little knowledge on what palliative care was but I was ready to jump into the subject. As a student studying psychology, I have always been interested in a variety of topics such as mental health, motivation, personality, and even neuropsychology. My interests are vast and joining in on research on palliative care only expanded my interests and made me appreciate the health care field.

Working with Dr. Kim and Dr. Gray has shown me what it is like to be a passionate, reliable, and hardworking individual. Like I previously mentioned, I was not even sure what palliative care was before I worked with Dr. Kim and Dr. Gray. However, these two women welcomed me with open arms and taught me everything I needed to know. They are so passionate about informing others on palliative care and the proper ways that direct health care workers can provide it. For their research project, they have created a palliative care training program for direct care workers which includes both nurses and certified nursing assistants. I learned that I was not alone in not knowing what palliative care is – there are many others who work in health care that do not know exactly what it is either. This is why it is so important that health care workers receive adequate and frequent training on a variety of topics, including palliative care. Dr. Kim and Dr. Gray strive to provide the best training possible for these workers because it not only helps them learn, but it helps their patients receive proper care as

well. That's one of the many reasons I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work on such an important project.

This project has also allowed me to work on tasks that I plan to do in my future career. I am planning to go on to graduate school and become a human resources professional or an industrial organizational psychologist. Within these fields, my goals lie within training and development, employee motivation, and creating healthy work environments to reduce stress and burnout. While this may seem very different on the surface, this project actually overlapped my interests and allowed me to dive into some of the work I am most interested in. The entire project revolved around improving a training program. I was able to individually work on this program as I sought out ideas and suggestions to improve the curriculum. One way I did this was by researching different case studies to include in the training. Finding case studies isn't the easiest thing to do, but I was able to find quite a few good examples that can be implemented into the training.

Another way I helped work on the program was through my qualitative analysis. When I did an analysis on the interviews that they had with participants, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the struggles and hardships nurses and CNAs go through at work. Reading these interviews and developing themes based off of them, I was able to bring new ideas and knowledge on what could be used in the trainings. For example, a lot of participants found it hard to cope with grief and stress or didn't know how to communicate with a patient's family. Based on my analysis, the training could involve more information on such topics. I also worked with quantitative data from the pre and post-tests. I was able to see what participants got right and wrong and take that into consideration when providing my suggestions on what could be improved.

Other than working with data, I was also able to research and evaluate a variety of articles on mindfulness and stress reduction interventions. This was very interesting to me because in my future career, I would love to improve workplace conditions that allow employees to work stress-free. I learned so many new things about mindfulness interventions that include different types of breathing, body scans, yoga, meditation, and more. Dr. Kim and Dr. Gray have also been working on incorporating a technological aspect into their training which includes a breathing application for workers to use in order to reduce stress. I researched different topics on using technology in trainings and education and was able to find some interesting sources for them to refer to.

Being a part of this research has done nothing but improve a variety of my skills. I have gained a sense of confidence when working with both qualitative and quantitative data as I was able to be very hands-on with my work. My communication skills have also improved as I always felt comfortable to ask questions. We met weekly to discuss my progress and upcoming goals and this helped me stay on track. Having the ability to provide feedback on work that was previously done and come up with my own ideas and suggestions on how to improve the training programs helped me learn how to work freely and creatively. This project has helped me realize how capable I am of working on and improving any project that is given to me through my work ethic.

Overall, while I may have not realized it before, I certainly know now how much of an impact being a part of the student engagement fund has had on me and my academic journey. I am so grateful to have been able to work with two amazing professors who care so much about their work and their field. They have truly shown me the importance of spreading knowledge and to continuously strive for better trainings to improve the health care field.