



ASSOCIATION OF
PUBLIC &
LAND-GRANT
UNIVERSITIES



VCU



CECE

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AWARDS PROGRAM

2023
CASE
STUDY

IEP CATEGORY - TALENT

Virginia Commonwealth University: Richmond Health and Wellness Program

THE NEED

The Richmond region is marked by significant health disparities, which are exacerbated in the City of Richmond by concentrated poverty and lack of access to health professionals.

Communities marked by poverty and health challenges are VCU's neighbors. For example, Dominion Place, a Section 8 housing complex with a high population of elderly residents and persons with disabilities, abuts VCU's campus. Dominion Place residents have a high rate of chronic disease, which results in frequent ambulatory care and emergency room usage.



*Richmond Health and Wellness Program
Student with a resident*

VCU'S RESPONSE

In 2012, the VCU School of Nursing and School of Pharmacy partnered with Dominion Place to provide weekly wellness clinics to apartment residents that would be staffed by students and guided by faculty. This Richmond Health and Wellness Program (RHWP) was designed to provide students with experiential learning and skills to meet evolving healthcare needs, including:

1. working in multidisciplinary teams
2. learning about social determinants of health (SDoH)
3. care coordination across disciplines.

Student teams worked directly with the residents to develop collaborative healthcare plans to identify and respond to minor health issues before they develop into major health emergencies, enabling residents to age in place.

University health clinics are fairly common, but one of RHWP's goals is to become a model for holistic care coordination and has generated the following significant innovations across health care training and delivery.

- Focusing on holistic person-centered, integrated care including assessment and coordinating access to care, health promotion and prevention services, and addressing social determinants of health services.



- Moving interprofessional instruction from the classroom into the field, creating an interdisciplinary approach to talent development that improved knowledge and changed the perception of how healthcare should be best practiced.
- Providing students with direct experience with geriatric care is one of the highest needs in healthcare.
- Collaborating with VCU Health System (VCUHS) to access VCUHS's medical tracking system, which allows RWHP's team members to communicate their coordination activities to the participant's VCUHS care providers.

The program evolved to integrate students from across the health professions, including pharmacy, medicine, physical therapy, occupational therapy, kinesiology, and psychology majors, and across grade levels, with representatives from the undergraduate through the doctoral level. On average, about 100 students across the various disciplines participate per semester through two academic courses, which satisfy a service-learning requirement for students' degree programs. Interest from students in continuing to participate in the program beyond academic requirements is so high that the School of Nursing is creating an elective version of the course. In 2019, RHWP partnered with the University of Richmond to add law students to the interprofessional teams. The student teams help community participants create wills and advanced directives and provide guidance around other issues faced by older adults aging in place while living on a limited income

In response to community need, RHWP added additional physical sites - Church Hill House, Rosa Apartments, Highland Park, and the VCU Health Hub at 25th (a community wellness center serving Richmond's East End, home to four public housing complexes) – and will add a mobile van by 2026. Like Dominion Place, all sites are located in urban neighborhoods with high crime rates and limited access to transportation, shopping, and healthy food options.

Participants can schedule a wellness visit, or they can walk into the clinic to address immediate issues. RHWP students and staff also perform home visits if the participant is unable to attend the clinic, especially for participants recently discharged from an emergency medical facility. During the pandemic, RHWP used phone check-ins for residents. While in-person clinics have re-opened, the program retained tele-wellness calls for vulnerable participants.

Residents have a strong voice in RHWP planning. They participate in an advisory council to ensure that community voice and social equity are integrated into service and research programming and sustainability planning, resulting in new programming and new research efforts.



Students in the clinics practice many of the care techniques learned in the classrooms. In addition to working in interdisciplinary teams to provide coordinated care, students rotate through different positions and assignments to learn all aspects of comprehensive care on-site. In a day, each team completes six to eight wellness appointments and debriefs with faculty after each one. In addition to the health assessments, students also undertake community assessments and provide health education to site residents. And they see firsthand the impact of SDoH on health.

The program was launched with a federal grant and has sustained itself financially through donor support and additional grant funding. Given the value it has provided to students and the community, it has received resources from VCU.

THE RESULTS

Imparting twenty-first-century skills in healthcare students through curricular innovation improves place-based health outcomes.

Talent

- More than 1,400 students trained
- A 2019 study revealed that students demonstrated improved knowledge in motivational interviewing, diabetes, hypertension, and frailty as measured by pre and post-surveys. A second survey to measure educational effectiveness and student readiness for interprofessional learning and change management found positive changes in their perceptions of interprofessional practice, specifically of teamwork and collaboration and of human-centered care.

Community Benefits:

- 1,450 Residents served.
- A 2019 study showed:
 - an increase in participant clinic visits from 5.6 times per year to more frequent visits, averaging 8.4 visits annually, increasing wellness care.
 - clinic participants reduced emergency room visits by 8.6 % and hospital admissions by 9.8 %
- A community advisory council helps identify research and service needs, such as the creation of a diabetes management program.



National Recognition

- The Institute for Healthcare Improvement recognized RHWP as an Age-Friendly Health System – Committed to Care Excellence for Older Adults.

Why it Matters

- “It’s a top-notch thing [RHWP], and it helps them as much as it helps us.” - Anonymous participant
- The RHWP clinics are “as much a social program as a medical program.” - Anonymous participant.

LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

Supporting Information:

- [Richmond Health and Wellness Main Page](#)

Articles:

- [Nursing Outlook Journal Article, Evaluation of in interprofessional care coordination model: Benefits to health and professional student and the community served](#)
- [Innovation in Aging Journal Article: Richmond Health and Wellness Program: Community Advisory Council Outcomes](#)
- [Series VCU’s Health Programs aimed at access and equity](#)

Videos:

- [RHWP Program Intro Video \(made for giving day\)](#)



ABOUT APLU

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is North America's oldest higher education association. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The association's membership consists of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations.

APLU's mission is to expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally.

Based in Washington, DC, the association's work is furthered by an active and effective advocacy arm that works with Congress and the administration as well as the media to advance federal policies that strengthen public universities and benefit the students they serve.

ABOUT THE IEP PROGRAM

APLU and its [Commission on Economic and Community Engagement \(CECE\)](#) established the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Program to help higher education institutions codify, elevate, and advance their campus enterprise supporting economic and community development.

The **IEP Designation Program** recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity.

The **IEP Awards Program** recognize exemplary and innovative projects in university-based economic and community engagement:

- Talent and workforce development
- Innovation, entrepreneurship, and tech-based economic development
- Place development through public service, outreach, and community engagement

Learn more at: www.APLU.org/IEP

