

# Community-based Education at the Faculty of Health Sciences

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The University of the Free State is strongly committed to societal engagement and to strengthen the fabric of the community it exists to serve. As part of this commitment, the University and the Faculty of Health Sciences have developed a concerted focus on the academic excellence in the health sciences domain, with the fundamental goal of improving the environment in which undergraduates and postgraduates can obtain knowledge and improve their clinical skills and provide a vehicle to serve the needs of the community.

## **B. ALIGNMENT WITH UFS STRATEGIC INTENT**

The vision of the project is to be recognized in South Africa (and eventually internationally) for the development of a sustainable community-centered collaborative framework, which may serve as a blueprint for other tertiary health science institutions.

The FHS Service project for Rural Communities is also distinctively aligned with the strategic intentions of the University, by enhancing the standard of undergraduate and postgraduate training and skills development.

It is imperative that the working committee of this project is driven by expertise, to advance excellence in the areas of research, teaching and public service.

A major component of this project is to be able to promote innovation, distinctiveness and leadership amongst students, facilitators, community leaders and teachers in academic, as well as human pursuits.

This initiative will generate transparent opportunities for lifelong learning for academic staff, especially in the healthcare sector.

The integrity of this project will be based on the five core values as underwritten by the University of the Free State,

- Superior Scholarship
- Human Embrace
- Institutional Distinctiveness
- Emergent Leadership
- Public Service

## GOAL OF THE FHS CBE PROJECT

To develop a community-centered collaborative framework sustainable, holistic healthcare and social development incorporated in the curricula of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

## OBJECTIVES

- **Community:** To develop equitable inclusive partnerships with diverse stakeholders eliciting social empathy that leads to social responsiveness and social justice.
- **Curriculum:** To generate an extended collaborative practice curriculum for both under- and post-graduate students in the Faculty of Health Sciences.
- **Centre:** To establish an academic centre of excellence that will facilitate flourishing praxis and research opportunities.

## C. KOPANANG LE FODISE

*‘Kopanang le fodise – United to heal’* is the motto for this project to the Southern Free State.

Since the initial pilot project, Ho Rutana *‘learn together’*, in 2015 in the rural Xhariep district, a more holistic approach to Community Based Education (CBE) in the form of Inter-professional Education (IPE) is used by the Faculty’s three Schools (Nursing, Allied Health Sciences and Medicine). As from February 2016 fourth-year students in the Faculty’s undergraduate programmes have been placed to experience collaboration and the realities of rural health care.

All fourth-year students of the Faculty of Health Sciences will each spend at least a week in inter-professional groups in primary healthcare facilities in the Kopanong municipality of the Xhariep district on a CBE-IPE platform in Trompsburg and Springfontein. During these rotations, the teams are firstly orientated and the activities of the week are discussed. Students interact with the community in different areas including schools and local clinics doing health screenings and addressing health promotion issues. Students do home visits and are involved in the screening and management of community members with chronic conditions. Clusters of the successive groups will be linked with each other through follow-up meetings mentored by the same facilitators. These groups follow-up the chronic patients and learners seen by the previous groups and will continue and expand health promotion projects initiated by their predecessors.

Though the original intent was improvement of community health, some of the community needs established during the stakeholder work sessions, create awareness of a variety of other issues, including social problems. This feedback, as well as feedback from students on the platform has broaden the project’s originally intended objectives and as a result involved

other university departments such as Social Work, Agriculture and Education as well as the related government departments which will eventually form part of a holistic collaboration.

With the establishment of the new '*Kopanang le fodise – united to heal*' project in 2016 the Faculty's involvement in the southern Free State aligns well with the Primary Healthcare (PHC) Re-engineering strategy of National Department of Health (NDoH). The project therefore is a timely and useful tool for improving health outcomes and furthering the intentions behind NHI. The National Department of Health (NDoH) adopted a three-stream approach for implementing the strategy:

- (i) Creating a Ward-based Outreach Team (WBOT) for each electoral ward;
- (ii) Strengthening the School Health Services; and
- (iii) Establishing District-based Clinical Specialist Teams (DCSTs) (Health Systems Trust 2016: Online)

#### **BENEFITS OF CBE-IPE PLATFORM**

Although pockets of collaborative Community Based Education practice have organically emerged, the need to design and structure an integrated educational platform that aligns with holistic service delivery, is essential.

Students are well exposed to several developing opportunities, for example; patient-centred healthcare, inter-professional and personal growth development, social responsiveness and consciousness. Students are also well exposed to experience in rural areas, with the intent also being them discovering/developing an interest in the potential of rural healthcare. Student feedback included:

- The week in Trompsburg and Springfontein forced me out of my comfort zone, it was a great learning experience and I enjoyed it a lot.
- The programme provides patients with the opportunity to access vital health services that would not have been possible.
- I think the programme is an outstanding idea and a great opportunity for different professions to learn from each other.

The establishment of such a platform will:

1. *Serve communities* with extensive healthcare needs.
2. *Support existing healthcare services* in their quest to provide quality healthcare in a challenged environment.
3. *Provide* future healthcare professionals with ample opportunities to develop key competencies according to the curriculum requirements.
4. *Offer* a unique opportunity to *share the responsibility* of healthcare with educators, students in the faculty, healthcare providers and members of the community.

#### **D. TROMPSBURG RESIDENCE**

IPE groups placed in the Southern Free State are accommodated in the Faculty's residence at the corner of Jan and Solm Street in Trompsburg, with the main entrance in Dawid Street.

The residence can accommodate 60 students housed in 10 units that each can accommodate six students in IPE groups. Each apartment has two bathrooms, a fully equipped kitchen and a living area. The idea being that students from different disciplines are constantly engaged whether in the work environment at "home" and during play.

The facility has seven rooms for lecturing staff and other visitors; it has a communal kitchen, a library and two lecture rooms with audio-visual equipment and wifi in all areas. The house of the residence head, the laundry, storage facilities and garages are additional infrastructure on the premises.

### **Trompsburg personnel**

With the establishment of the Trompsburg residence for 60 students and eight lecturers in the Southern Free State, control, management and caretaking of the facility are important aspects of the successfully running the residence. A residence head was appointed in July 2016.

To facilitate interaction amongst the students of the Faculty's three Schools' and to assist in teaching, learning and assessment including student mentoring a permanent academic facilitator was appointed.

The faculty acquired two 23-seater vehicles and a sedan to make student movement on the training platform possible; the Faculty appointed two drivers, one from the Trompsburg area. A gardener/ handy man takes care of the grounds and minor maintenance issues at the residence. This appointment along with that of the facilitator and the one driver will have an economic impact on the community since community members are employed by the Faculty.

## **E. PARTNERSHIPS AND BENEFICIARIES**

The working relationships between the different role players strengthen the foundation for collaborative engagement. Community participation has already been established and slowly starting to generate shared accountability and ownership of this initiative. Feedback from appreciative Kopanong residents (work sessions held on 1 and 2 September 2016) is that the initiative is needed, is value adding, that they are eager to collaborate to improve social development as a whole. Additional needs: social determinants of health, social issues in the community, will require more resource allocation. One issue raised by the community at this gathering was the sustainability of the project.

A major strength of this initiative is the receptivity of the community and the wide area that is been covered. The Xhariep District includes Kopanong municipality, more specifically the towns of Trompsburg and Springfontein.

An additional strength of the current initiative is the development of a credible, updated database. This system will offer access to historical data and create research opportunities. The following partnerships and beneficiaries have already been involved:

- **Faculty CBE programmes**
  - Projects and initiatives within School of Allied Health Professions
  - Projects and initiatives within School of Medicine
  - Projects and initiatives within School of Nursing
- **UFS Departments**
  - Institutional Community Engagement
  - Institutional Advancement
  - Economic Management and Sciences
  - Social Work
  - Psychology
  - Student Affairs
  - Fine Arts
  - Physical Planning
  - ICT
  - Finances
- Kopanong Community
- Free State Department of Health
- Free State Department of Education
- Free State Department of Social Development
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- **Academic Collaborators**
  - Stellenbosch University
  - University of London South Bank

## **F. AWARDS**

The work done on the platform has also been recognized by the Rural Doctors' Association of South Africa at their Rural Health Conference held in Grahamstown through the awarding of a recognition certificate to one of our facilitator for contribution to development of rural health.

During the UFS annual Community Engagement Award Ceremony three members of our team received awards for the work that they have done during the past year to promote community health and social development.

## **G. RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES**

This engagement with the community created fertile ground for research (already registered, funded research projects on the platform) and interdisciplinary research. An overarching research proposal using the Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR) approach and aligned with the goal and objectives previously mentioned was created by the CBE working committee that will allow all future research projects to be conducted under one umbrella. The sharing of obtained knowledge and experience at conferences and congresses will put the University in the forefront of creating a workable approach towards a community-centred collaborative care framework.

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Location of Trompsburg residence



Trompsburg residence



Trompsburg facilities





CBE-IPE in action



Stakeholder engagement



Health services for rural communities