# What's for Lunch?
## A Helping Professions
## Faculty Collaborative Model That Works

**Kathleen C. Sadao**
*Stockton Unified School District*
**Jean Gonsier-Gerdin**
*California State University, Sacramento*
**& Simalee Smith-Stubblefield**
*University of the Pacific*

> *It has opened a broader view of possibilities for collaboration with other colleagues in other professions than I could have imagined. Highly encouraging was the recognition that other departments were as desirous as our own of initiating this kind of dialogue.* (Faculty 7)

This quote from a participant in the project describe here highlights changes in the health and education sectors during the last quarter century in which service provision has moved from discipline specific strategies to a more collaborative, transdisciplinary, team approach to improve care options for those in need (Friend & Cook, 2000; Cramer, 1998; Sadao, 2001). Influencing this trend has been the change from service-centered philosophies to person-focused and family-centered efforts evident in the helping professions (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1997). Helping professions have shifted paradigms in which they operate from

*Kathleen C. Sadao is an assistant principal in the Stockton Unified School District, Stockton, California. E-mail ksadao@stockton.k12.ca.us*

*Jean Gonsier-Gerdin is an assistant professor of special education in the College of Education at California State University, Sacramento. E-mail jgonsiergerdin@csus.edu*

*Simalee Smith-Stubblefield is an associate professor and chair of the Department of Speech-Language Pathology in the Benerd School of Education at the University of the Pacific, Stockton, California. E-mail ssmith@pacific.edu*

an agency specific direction driving the delivery of services in a uni-disciplinary fashion to a family focus in how services are provided to individuals with disabilities and their families (Swan & Morgan, 1993). The key characteristic of family focused service is collaboration across agencies and among service providers who traditionally adhered to more specific disciplinary beliefs and practices.

Paralleling this change in service delivery have been the amendments and reauthorizations to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), first passed in November of 1975. This special education law was a landmark legislation that assured individuals with disabilities received a free and appropriate education within the least restrictive environment. Some students who had never been to school now received their education in special education classrooms designed with their specific needs in mind. However, in the 1980s, the dual systems of general education and special education met with discontent from some parents and advocates, which precipitated a more integrated service delivery system. Coined inclusive education (Stainback & Stainback, 1990), the model required teams of professionals to work together for the common purpose of serving students with disabilities along side their same-age peers. Collaboration among parents, teachers, administrators and related services personnel was a critical element in the success of any inclusive school model (Friend & Cook, 2000).

Between the 1970 and 1980 time period, a multidisciplinary attitude prevailed in preservice education programs as well as in service delivery. Students pursuing careers in health care, education and social services learned discipline focused values and attitudes that carried over into the work environment. Although teachers, nurses, social workers, and other related service professionals worked within the school system and provided services to the same child, they adhered to their respective discipline's philosophical approach to diagnosis and treatment options.

During the middle to late 1980s, interdisciplinary and interagency cooperation and coordination were explored by researchers in the fields of early childhood special education and maternal and child health (Magrab & Schmidt, 1980; Magrab, Elder, Kazuk, Pelosi, & Wiegerink, 1982). Service providers were encouraged to work together to provide combined services to their clientele in order to capitalize on the sharing of scarce resources and avoid duplication of services. The intent behind the 1986 IDEA revision was for states to develop coordinated and comprehensive service delivery systems and create interagency coordinating councils that would oversee the effort (Cramer, 1998; Sadao, 2002; Sadao, 2001; Sadao, 1997; Sadao & Robinson, 2002, Sadao, Robinson, & Magrab, 1997; Swan & Morgan, 1993). Service providers did interact

more purposefully during this time period but their higher education counterparts still emphasized a discipline-centered way of thinking about service provision. As remarked by Stoneman and Malone (1998):

> Funding policies lag behind paradigm shifts; so does the preparation of personnel. Academic institutions, like the rest of society, are resistant to change. Faculty develop set ways of teaching and, all too often, perpetuate a fixed belief system over the course of a career. (p. 244)

In the 1990s, fueled by the momentum of the inclusive schools movement, where students with disabilities were being encouraged to participate in their neighborhood schools and adults with disabilities were self-advocating for a chance at community independence, the collaboration model among professionals bourgeoned as best practice for serving individuals with disabilities (Friend & Cook, 2000). Disciplines moved from a working together attitude to assuming more cross-professional responsibilities and affiliations. The term "transdisciplinary" was used by service providers to describe a practice and attitude of learning the philosophies and methods of other disciplines and integrating those practices into their own approach to serving families and children. One of the authors of this paper created the term "discipline reciprocity," which is defined as "maintaining the discipline-focused value system while accepting and internalizing cross-discipline recognition, understanding and practices in order to emphasize the relational elements of transdisciplinary practice." The relationships among professionals allowed for a sharing across disciplines to occur that moved them beyond thinking and acting in a single discipline focused way. Discipline reciprocity was the undergirding principle that supported the initiation and ongoing development of the faculty collaborative reported on here.

However, although the concept of collaboration was recognized as a best practice initiative, most service providers were not prepared to make the leap to discipline reciprocity where professionals were required to actually practice cross-disciplinary skills in the workplace. This was due in part to the discipline specific nature of higher education training efforts. Lack of collaborative modeling and skill building in preservice training programs at universities nationwide created a dilemma in how to adequately prepare preservice professionals for effectively collaborating in the field (Korinek & McLaughlin, 1996; Sadao & Robinson, 2002). One university wide group that received funding to study interdisciplinary teams and service provisions for individuals with developmental disabilities provided the only example of higher education collaboratives among various helping profession disciplines for several decades. The

University Affiliated Programs (UAF), sponsored by grants through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 1974, reauthorized in 1996 (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000) were housed in universities and required professionals from education, medicine, vocational rehabilitation, and other related services disciplines to coordinate training and research endeavors to examine the most appropriate service models for individuals with developmental disabilities. The UAPs have been in existence since the late 1960s and were the only higher education model for collaboration until recently when faculty collaboratives began to be investigated (Amey & Brown, 2000; Knapp, Barnard, Gehrke, & Teather, 1999; Korinek & McLaughlin, 1996; LaBonte, Leighty, Mills, & True, 1995; Paul, Marfo, & Anderson, 1996).

The university organization in general represents a discipline and faculty specific culture that makes collaborative efforts across the campus very challenging, and unrewarding. As explained by Paul, Marfo, & Anderson (1996), "Deep change that affects our beliefs and behavior, our relationships with others, our professional role, and the way we define our academic work is very difficult" (p. 133). Additionally, with the lack of research in this vein, there remain very few models to replicate (Alva & Kim-Goh, 1999; Karosoff, 1999; Knapp, Barnard, Gehrke, & Teather, 1999; Korinek & McLaughlin, 1996; LaBonte, Leighty, & Mills, True, 1995; Paul, Marfo, & Anderson, 1996).

The need to prepare teachers and related services professionals to establish and maintain partnerships with colleagues and students' family members and learn the dance of discipline reciprocity is just beginning to be addressed in formal coursework in preservice programs (Cramer, 1998; Mostert, 1998; Paul, Marfo, & Anderson, 1996). Currently it is the exception rather than the rule for preservice programs to include interdisciplinary collaborative team training:

> Despite the expectation that educators and related services professionals will collaborate to problem solve concerning students with special needs, and despite the desirability of interdisciplinary team training, most preservice preparation has been largely unidisciplinary. While exceptions exist, opportunities to learn and practice problem solving in an interdisciplinary team context have been limited in typical preparation programs. Students are expected to work effectively with colleagues from other disciplines once they graduate into professional positions, yet get little modeling or practice for collaborative roles. (Korinek & McLaughlin, 1996, p. 41)

An appropriate recommendation is that "training and practice in this [collaborative] process be incorporated into preservice preparation programs through modules, coursework or seminars, and supervised oppor-

tunities to participate on collaborative [interdisciplinary] teams during field experiences" (Korinek & McLaughlin, 1996, p. 43).

With this historical framework and gap in the research in mind, the faculty of the Special Education Program at the Benerd School of Education, University of the Pacific, in collaboration with another faculty member from the Speech-Language Pathology Department, Long School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, applied and were awarded a James Irvine Learning Assessment Grant to form an interprofessional, interdisciplinary working group. The University of the Pacific is a rich resource of disciplines that emphasize helping others, including but not limited to: special education, curriculum and instruction, psychology, speech-language pathology, school psychology, physical therapy, pharmacy, adaptive physical education, music therapy, and educational administration. However, although the special education staff noted a need for a collaborative venture across campus to enhance preservice training programs for students working on their Education Specialist Credentials, there was no vehicle to stimulate an exchange of ideas and skill development except for isolated cases when students from other departments such as music therapy, curriculum and instruction, and speech and language pathology attended a cross-listed special education course. Likewise, faculty from the Speech-Language Pathology Department recognized a similar need for a component on collaboration in their programs for the Clinical Rehabilitative Services Credential/Language, Speech and Hearing Specialist. An interdisciplinary course centering on collaboration and consultation taught by a team from various disciplines was non-existent at the University of the Pacific.

The initial purpose of the interprofessional committee was to strategize course design to more effectively model collaboration at the faculty level and provide courses that emphasize collaboration skills development at the student level. At the time of the grant award in 1998, very few models of faculty collaboratives existed (Corrigan & Bishop, 1997; Mostert, 1998; Paul, Marfo, & Anderson, 1996; Wilson, Karasoff, & Nolan, 1993). The three faculty group leaders decided to use group consensus to identify a mission of the group and the area of focus for the monthly meetings and evaluate the group process using a qualitative research design at the end of the one year grant cycle.

## Research Questions

The purpose of the following qualitative study was to describe the interprofessional collaborative group process, identify the outcomes of the collaborative working group and gather the perceptions of the faculty

participants concerning their involvement in the group. The second component to the study was to measure the perceptions of students concerning their participation in the undergraduate course "Introduction to the Helping Professions." The following research questions were addressed:

> 1. What were the processes and outcomes of the interprofessional collaborative group?
>
> 2. What were the perceptions of faculty involvement in the working group?
>
> 3. What were the perceptions of students concerning their involvement in the "Introduction to the Helping Professions" course?

## Evaluation of the Collaborative

A general qualitative methodology (Merriam, 1998) was employed to evaluate the outcomes of the group collaborative during the first year of operation. The three faculty team leaders of the effort documented group activities through monthly meeting notes and were involved in all aspects of the group formulation and efforts. The approach to the evaluative component of the group work was similar to a team ethnography of the process (Erickson & Stull, 1998) allowing for a description of the process and outcomes to be documented. The insider nature of their roles provided opportunities for them to observe the interprofessional group development each step of the way and to describe the process from an emic perspective. The results include both a descriptive review of the process and outcomes as observed by team facilitators and a summative evaluation of faculty participation in the committee work. During the last official meeting of the collaboration group's first year, twelve participants were asked to respond to nine open-ended questions concerning their perceptions regarding the activities of the group and the major outcomes resulting from the collaborative approach. Questions focused on: personal benefits from the group process, major outcomes revealed, highlights, modifications, preparation of students, and continued participation opportunities. The specific questions were as follows:

> 1. Did this group assist you in exploring collaboration across campus?
>
> 2. What were the personal benefits of your participation in this group?
>
> 3. In your opinion, what were the major outcomes of this group?
>
> 4. What were the positive aspects/highlights of the group process?
>
> 5. Were there any aspects of this experience that you feel need to be changed or modified? Please explain.

6. In what ways do you see this interprofessional collaboration project improving the ways that we prepare our students for diverse careers in the helping professions?

7. If the group became a formal committee on campus, would you like to continue as a participant/member?

8. Would you like to be involved in the planning of the modules for the "Introduction to Helping Professions" course?

9. Any other comments or suggestions?

A constant comparative analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) entailed a review of the responses to the open ended questions. Two faculty reviewers read each completed questionnaire and then identified specific themes from the data. Using two evaluators to examine the data provided a way to triangulate the findings across reviewers. The results of the question-naire were then refined into five major categories of benefits: student learning, personal, interpersonal, group, and institutional. Lastly, the students participating in the first course offering "Introduction to the Helping Professions" were queried about their participation. The summative evaluation is limited in their perceptions of the interdisciplinary taught class and does not provide information about their attitudes regarding interdisciplinary thinking and whether collaborative skills were developed from their participation in the course. This might be an area of research to be considered in future interdisciplinary research endeavors.

## Outcomes of Collaborative Working Group

A structure and process were designed by the team leaders to create an interdisciplinary planning committee. A small Irvine Grant available through the University ($2,000) was applied for in 1998. Two special education faculty prepared the grant. A third collaborator was identified from the Speech and Language Department in the School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences who reviewed the draft and agreed with the objectives to create an interdisciplinary faculty collaborative the next school year. Once the grant monies were received, the three collabora-tors met to set the schedule and handle all of the logistics including inviting participants through sending letters to all chairs of departments where helping professions preservice coursework was offered. Deans/chairs were asked to identify a representative to attend the first meeting. Meetings were held on a monthly basis and lunches were provided to all faculty participants during the 1998-1999 school year. Invitations were initially sent out to professors known to the team. Duplicate information was shared with their respective chairs and deans and they were asked

to share with other faculty whom they thought might be interested. The team leaders developed an agenda prior to each meeting based on information generated at preceding events and took on the roles of meeting convener, facilitator and note taker. Team leaders shifted their roles and responsibilities each month to demonstrate true collaborative teaming.

Initially, the group shared program needs and brainstormed ideas for collaboration. The interprofessional group members also examined current course offerings across disciplines to determine potential courses for which faculty between departments and programs could collaborate to meet the needs of their students, schools and community. Needs were prioritized and an initial focus of the group effort was identified. Although the group process generated many ideas, the faculty chose to target their efforts on developing an interdisciplinary course on the helping professions. The team leaders then sought out the assistance of the Provost's office to market the course as a university-wide venture. The Provost, supported the effort and provided some ideas for potential avenues for continued funding opportunities. The course was then assigned a university wide course number. The responses from faculty were extremely positive and encouraging.

After two years of committee operation, the group submitted a proposal to the Provost and received annual funds ($4,000) that are ongoing to date to support the course and monthly meetings. However, faculty participating in the group work did not receive any workload credit for their participation. During the first year of the course offering, a senior faculty member volunteered to coordinate and facilitate the course without workload assigned to his duties. During the second and subsequent times that the course was offered, the course coordinator received a $2,500 stipend from the provost's office in lieu of workload units to facilitate the course. The motivation for faculty stakeholders was for the most part intrinsic and not compensated for through workload reductions or monetary means.

Another idea of the group was to develop an interprofessional collaboration certificate program at the graduate level. There are a few model sites across the nation that have designed and implemented such a program (Curtis & Garcia, 1999; Karasoff, 1999; Stodden, Johnson, Kelly, Kim-Rupnow, Stodden, Guinan, & Ratcliffe, 2000). The group determined that a needs assessment should be conducted before development of such a program and further information gathered from existing interprofessional certificate programs. The faculty continue to investigate this option and have now included community members from agencies, such as the Valley Mountain Regional Center, to begin the exploration of faculty/community partnerships. This example highlights

the influence of group process in determining the focus of the interprofessional collaborative effort.

The major outcomes of the project included: (1) the establishment of an interprofessional collaborative group that continues to meet at the time of this writing; (2) the development of collaborative strategies and re-sources as well as instructional teaming between faculty; (3) the creation of an interdisciplinary undergraduate course titled "Introduction to the Helping Professions"; (4) the creation of an interdisciplinary minor; (5) funding from the provost's office for the course and monthly meetings; and (6) the cross-fertilization among faculty and students from various depart-ments and programs at the University of the Pacific. Not only were the goals of the project accomplished, but faculty felt that the interprofessional group allowed participants to think across professions and improve the ways students are prepared for diverse careers in the helping professions.

The following section reviews the benefits of the effort as perceived by the stakeholders during the first year of operation. The results are grouped into personal and interpersonal benefits for students, faculty, groups, and institution. Direct quotes from faculty are used to emphasize the qualitative nature of the results. Due to the qualitative responses gathered, generalizations outside of this faculty collaborative cannot be assumed. However, the authors recommend ways that other institutions might attempt to design a faculty collaborative using examples from the approach taken here.

### Perceived Student Learning Benefits by Faculty

Faculty commented on the aspect of modeling teamwork early on for students as a precursor to their future success in their fields and increasing their knowledge base and awareness of multiple disciplines.

> *Definitely modeling teamwork in human service fields early on; encourag-ing students to explore various potential fields of study; common under-standing of related disciplines to their selected field of study.* (Faculty 3)

> *They'll be able to make better choices of career for themselves. Hopefully, they will also continue to have an interest in such collaboration.* (Faculty 6)

> *It would certainly broaden basic understanding of all helping professionals and help students feel more knowledgeable. Could be a way to retain students who are on the fences as to their futures.* (Faculty 9)

### Personal Faculty Benefits

Overwhelmingly, faculty indicated that they enjoyed meeting new people and learning about courses and departments unknown to them. Faculty found value in meeting other faculty with similar interests and

received confirmation by the group that their ideas and research directions were of substance and importance.

> *I got to meet several people I didn't know, especially in the School of Education.* (Faculty 6)

> *The mere opportunity to meet and discuss collaboration was a very positive force.* (Faculty 8)

> *Getting to know others across campus and eating good food.* (Faculty 10)

Faculty gained insight and understanding about other departments and became less insulated in their respective fields by working together as a group.

### *Interpersonal Faculty Benefits*

In addition to meeting new people and learning about other disciplines, faculty commented on the unique opportunity of actively engaging in the collaboration process. The mission of collegiality and acceptance of other points of view was exemplified as a secondary outcome of the group process.

> *Yes. Different points of view [exploring collaboration on campus]. Nourishment; exchange of ideas.* (Faculty 10)

> *I most enjoyed the collegiality, the opportunity to become better acquainted with others on the faculty.* (Faculty 7)

> *Those present interacted well with each other. As with many brainstorming meetings, a lot of ideas were offered, and some were of great interest to the group.* (Faculty 5)

> *The opportunity to meet and work together with other faculty on campus was very enriching. It helped create new linkages across campus and new friends!* (Faculty 3)

The informal environment of the monthly meetings coupled with the lunches created an atmosphere where faculty felt energized and comfortable about the exchange of ideas.

### *Group Benefits*

The actual group process was highlighted as a positive aspect of the interprofessional group meetings. Faculty enjoyed the camaraderie and stimulating discussions that were encouraged by the group leaders. Successful group functioning where faculty respected, trusted, and enjoyed each other were critical to achieving productive outcomes.

> *The sense of energy and enthusiasm of the group generated as we progressed was all on a very positive note. Lots of cooperation!* (Faculty 7)

*The brainstorming sessions created good energy and universal participation.* (Faculty 4)

*All these "helping" folks are pretty good about respecting and listening to each other. Fun meetings with creative participation and constructive ideas.* (Faculty 8)

### Institutional Benefits

The traditional university culture of academic insulation by department was changed as a result of the informal committee's monthly meetings. Faculty found value in meeting new colleagues and collaborating on a joint university-wide project that would benefit student development. By linking their efforts with the university mission, faculty demonstrated to administrators the importance of faculty collaboratives.

*This group was an excellent example of cross campus collaboration. The activity made all of us involved aware of common activities engaged by various departments within the university.* (Faculty 1)

*For us (on the "north" campus), the opportunity to meet with and plan with faculty from other disciplines has been exciting and helped us feel more a part of the university "community" — and has helped me to a better understanding of other offerings at UOP.* (Faculty 2)

*Committee work is often mechanical and done as part of one's obligation. This experience was the best and most fruitful committee I've ever done.* (Faculty 4)

*Discussing what we do; the interrelationships of the disciplines; ways to combine knowledge of all areas; and, finally designed the course.* (Faculty 9)

One of the biggest indicators of success of the collaborative was the planning and implementation of the first course offered in the Spring of 1999, "Introduction to the Helping Professions." The pilot class offered faculty a chance to present their individual disciplinary practices and participate in three mock cases of individuals with disabilities that were discussed by several of the interprofessional faculty members modeling an interdisciplinary team approach for the students. The second success factor was the continuation of the monthly meetings where faculty met to discuss course issues and identify future directions of the committee. Although the initial grant was expended after year two, and continuation funding from the provost's office was not received until year four, faculty remained committed to the mission of the group during the year and benefited from the continued cross-fertilization opportunities. The third factor relating to the continued functioning of the group was the receipt of a small grant from the university in 2000 for continued planning

purposes that included a budget for monthly lunches and a stipend for the coordinator of the course.

The group continued to expand its membership and in 2000 invited the career and counseling center to participate in monthly meetings, thus creating a link between departments and institutional student support groups. Additionally, the group identified other support mechanisms within the university and invited a grants office director to be involved in exploring other potential avenues of funding for group activities. In 2002, the group further expanded its stakeholder involvement by inviting a service learning project representative to the meetings. The inclusion of a university wide project representative later resulted in the course and newly created minor being housed in an interdepartmental service learning academy that provided clerical and administrative support for the continuation of the course outside the departments represented on the committee.

## Development of the Course
## "Introduction to the Helping Professions"

The collective rationale behind the course "Introduction to the Helping Professions" supported the university's mission to provide a "superior student-centered learning environment integrating liberal arts and professional education and preparing individuals for lasting achievement and responsible leadership in their careers and communities." (UOP, 2001, p. 1). The course was structured to promote interprofessional collaborative networking among the university's diverse faculty and to offer a model for students, early on in their career selection and pursuits that encourages the development of interagency team philosophy and skills and helps students make informed decisions about their major course of study. The course provides information about different helping professions careers and assignments that capitalize on experiential learning opportunities in the fields of study as well as an interdisciplinary team format for analyzing cases presented in class. The course syllabus was designed by several stakeholders and revised annually with input from the interprofessional group. The course facilitator from the previous year worked with the newly selected course coordinator to assure continuity each year. Group members volunteered to participate in at least one class presentation of their career pursuits and on one of the teams that presented one of three mock cases on a child with a disability. Cases were developed by committee members based on actual experiences in their respective fields and from other special education case studies developed for classroom use (Boyle & Danforth, 2001). The course

was offered as an experimental course the first two years and was submitted and accepted as a university-wide course in 2000.

The purpose of the course is to familiarize undergraduate students with the fields providing health and education services to individuals and their families. A maximum of 40 students per course may enroll in a given semester. Students are introduced to various career options through panel presentations, discussions, and case studies focusing on prevention, assessment and treatment issues. Faculty from several departments on campus and professionals from the community, present information on their respective professions during designated class periods over the course of the semester. The instructor of record coordinates the class sessions, including grading and arranging of the panel presentations, case studies, and field activities. Case presentations focus on a particular individual with a disability and small groups of faculty work together to review the case, similar to a problem-based learning format (Cockrell, Hughes-Caplow, & Donaldson, 2000).

A pilot course was offered in the Spring of 1999 with sixteen students enrolled. During the last class session, these students completed a course evaluation with eleven open-ended questions regarding their expectations for the course and their perceptions of the course format, activities and assignments. The specific questions were:

1. List your reason for initially taking the course.

2. What did you hope to learn from the course?

3. Did the course help you think about considering different career options? YES / NO If yes, how so?

4. What did you like most about the course?

5. What would you change about the course?

6. What impressed you most about the course, professors, textbook, or assignments?

7. Did the three case study presentations help you think about delivery of services to the clients that you hope to serve? YES / NO If you will not serve clients in a helping profession, note that the question was not applicable to you. If yes, how so?

8. What did you think about the cross-disciplinary format of the course where professors and professionals from different fields came and presented information about their particular discipline? Would you prefer to have a single instructor talk about the various fields?

9. Was the written observation/interview assignment a worthwhile activity for you? How might you change it?

10. Some of the presenters described their personal sagas concerning how they became the professionals they are. Was that a good idea, and should all presenters do that?

11. Are there any comments you would like to make or suggestions you would like to offer about the course?

A constant comparative analysis similar to the one employed with the faculty questionnaire responses was employed to review responses to the open-ended questions. Two faculty reviewers read each completed questionnaire and identified specific themes from the data.

### Student Perceptions

The responses from the students were quite favorable and all benefited in some way from the course. In terms of career exploration, a number of students expressed that the course exposed them to careers that they had not previously considered.

*It did open my eyes and interest me in a lot of different fields.* (Student 1)

*I didn't know a lot about some of the careers and I got so much interesting information about careers I had never even considered.* (Student 11)

*I learned a lot about majors that I had previously brushed off, not really knowing what they were.* (Student 14)

A few students actually chose a major or future career path as a result of the course.

*I was originally not doing anything with my career, meaning I had no idea what career I wanted. After this class I have decided on school psychology. Thanks to the fabulous presentation.* (Student 2)

*It introduced me to the option of school administration. I know now how to get into and that it is a possible option for me to later transition into.* (Student 12)

While other students remained with their previously chosen majors/ careers, they commented that they gained more specific knowledge about areas in their future professions and were encouraged to explore different dimensions of their professions.

*I learned a lot more than I thought I would about psychology, all different types of therapy, and much more.* (Student 13)

*I learned what kinds of careers there are in social services, such as clinical social work or medical social work.* (Student 10)

*I learned great information on what some possibilities are for later training.* (Student 9)

Furthermore, the course also served to reaffirm students' interest in a helping profession. As one student aptly expressed,

> *The speakers really encouraged and told stories that made me want to 'help.'* (Student 16)

The interdisciplinary format with a different professional(s) presenting each week was a valued aspect of the course.

> *I think that having different professionals was a very effective way of presenting the material. If there were only one professor he/she would not be able to answer our many questions and a variety of speakers kept me interested.* (Student 8)

> *I loved the cross-disciplinary format. I felt that they knew more than only one professor who has done research could.* (Student 2)

In addition, the students found the personal sagas/experiences of the presenters to be enlightening and encouraging.

> *I enjoyed hearing the career paths all the professionals took to get to where they are today — very informative.* (Student 13)

> *The different professionals had life lessons they told which was vital to the course.* (Student 2)

> *It's reassuring to know not everyone had a clear idea of what they were going to be from day 1.* (Student 12)

Other benefits of the course were achieved through the case study presentations. Students commented on how these case studies provided opportunities to experience the collaborative process and to prepare them for their future careers.

> *The case studies made me realize how much collaboration is needed for just one client's services.* (Student 2)

> *It prepared me for the future settings and situations I will be exposed to during my professional career.* (Student 16)

> *It was very useful to see how different professions work together in an IEP situation.* (Student 14)

> *It provided for a hands-on experience to see what I will be dealing with in my major.* (Student1)

Overall, the students found the pilot course to be practical, enjoyable and very worthwhile. The words of two students can best indicate the initial response from participants regarding the course. One student declared,

*This course has changed my life for the better. (*Student 5)

Another commented,

*It's an awesome class that can really help you in deciding what direction in life to take.* (Student 1)

## Conclusion

The monthly luncheon sessions afforded the faculty the opportunity to meet new colleagues, to generate potential collaborative initiatives and to learn about other programs on campus. The members of the interprofessional collaboration group valued the chance to consider possibilities for collaboration with colleagues in other professions.

The cross-fertilization that occurred among faculty and students from various departments and programs in the university offers a type of support to meet the needs of students seeking careers in the helping professions by providing a glimpse at the potential benefits of interprofessional collaboration among faculty, students, and community and demonstrate the dance of discipline reciprocity.

The course provides a vehicle for training educators and related services personnel in collaborative problem-solving and transdisciplinary practices early in their preservice careers. Students are introduced to many disciplines involved in the service of others in education and health fields. The course is proactive in modeling innovative community collaborative efforts and provides students with experiential learning opportunities through community outreach assignments and case study presentations. However, the interprofessional course design was only one of the outcomes experienced by the faculty work group. The faculty continues to meet and discuss other potential avenues of collaboration across schools on campus.

The real evidence that stakeholder involvement was evident across all members and departments was that one of the team leaders left the group in 2002 and the other in 2003. At the time of their departures, an interdisciplinary minor had already been established, individual faculty members had submitted presentations of various aspects of the group work to discipline-specific conferences including special education, educational research, adaptive physical education, and liberal arts education. In addition, a higher education grant was submitted to conduct community outreach to high school students in the area of career awareness, the interdisciplinary minor proposed was finalized and approved by the university program review committee, the helping professions course was eventually housed in a newly designed university service learning institu-

tion to provide an administrative body to increase student enrollment in the course offering, the curriculum continued to be revised by the committee, a companion service learning course was created, and the Provost's office continued to fund a faculty stipend for the course coordinator.

The following recommendations are offered to other universities considering the creation and implementation of a cross-discipline faculty collaborative. The model (see Table 1) is based on previous work by Bruner (1991) and Sadao and Robinson (2002) for formulating and evaluating interagency collaboration that organizes interagency elements into three categories: governance/structure, technical assistance, and action planning and implementation. Similar categories were created for the interprofessional group work evaluated in this study to present the critical components of designing an interprofessional collaborative at the higher education level. The first level of the design encompasses institutional support from funding and administrative approval of the initiative. The second tier is the actual support of the committee work and faculty involvement. The third organizational element is action planning and implementation.

The collaborative model created by this grant initiative provides a process and a structure for developing goals, convening an interprofessional working group, and brainstorming ways to work together on improving student outcomes in preservice training. The critical component to the success of the faculty workgroup was the commitment of all of the stakeholders in working together to explore opportunities for collaboration on campus along with the support of the team leaders. Fundamental to the success of the collaboration was the rotation of facilitator roles and duties. With an investment in moving beyond unidisciplinary barriers, faculty created an interprofessional course that will be taught by all stakeholders. The faculty coordinator position for the course changes each year allowing for different departments to assume the main responsibility of the details involved in planning and implementing the class. No single faculty or school takes on oversight functions, allowing the collaborative nature of the course to be fluid and truly an interprofessional and cross-campus endeavor. In 2002, the course was cross-listed and housed in a new service learning academy that is cross-disciplinary in nature. The richness of the university community is capitalized upon by the sharing of ideas, time, resources, and responsibilities to improve student learning outcomes. Alva and Kim-Goh (1999) noted a similar finding that the need for an official instructor of record required by the university was best kept at the school level and rotated among the committee members to allow for the sharing of responsibility and continued ownership of the collaborative to take place.

**Table 1**
Interprofessional Collaborative Group Model

| Organizational Levels | Interprofessional Group Elements |
| --- | --- |
| Institutional Support | (1) Form a core group of faculty committed to creating and implementing an interprofessional group;<br>(2) Link the effort to the university's mission and priorities;<br>(3) Identify a small grant that can provide funding to support monthly meetings with refreshments offered;<br>(4) Garner support from administration including Dean and Provost level;<br>(5) Commitment from Deans/Chairs for use of secretarial staff, Xerox copiers and computers, and other clerical support for group work. |
| Committee Support and Faculty Involvement | (1) Create informal meeting bylaws and decision making strategies (formalizing committee structure is not necessary for adequate group functioning);<br>(2) Team leaders rotate facilitating meetings, taking minutes, sending emails to group participants, etc.;<br>(3) Schedule meetings at convenient times and locations decided upon by group consensus;<br>(4) Keep minutes and share with all participants monthly;<br>(5) Reward faculty for collaborative group work through annual faculty evaluations;<br>(6) Create many ways to encourage faculty dialog and networking across depts. |
| Action Planning and Implementation | (1) Brainstorm ideas and create an annual action plan with duties assigned to group members;<br>(2) Continue to identify new members and publicize group work through university bulletins and local, national and international conferences;<br>(3) Meet with the provost annually to report on progress;<br>(4) Continue to identify potential funding sources annually. |

The model can be replicated in other higher education programs and the structure and process evaluated to document the effectiveness of interweaving multiple perspectives from different disciplines in higher education preservice training programs. Not only does the model hold

promise for offering a collaborative framework for higher education institutions to consider, the undergraduate course offers students exposure to cross-disciplinary attitudes early on in their educational pursuits. Research on the outcomes of cross-disciplinary teaching and collaborative disciplinary practices is still in the infancy stages in higher education preservice training programs and requires further research. A major question is whether collaborative skill development in under-graduate courses affects student attitudes about working outside of their discipline perspective.

Going beyond the tangible product of the helping professions course produced by faculty members, other benefits of a more intrinsic nature were revealed. Faculty benefited personally from forging new collegial connections with other faculty interested in similar research interests. The collaborative team leader model provided an exemplary approach to committee work by demonstrating decision making by group consensus. As one faculty commented at the last sponsored luncheon session,

> *Lunch with faculty from other disciplines — it is less 'easy' to fight with people with whom you also 'break bread.'* (Faculty 2)

"Breaking bread" together may be an overlooked necessity for the effectiveness of any collaborative effort when discipline-centric attitudes brought to the table need to be dissipated before true group work can begin. Karasoff (1999) notes that "collaborative partnerships are the wave of the future. As a result, the training programs offered by IHEs must prepare themselves for a new way of doing business" (p. 65). The University of the Pacific has undertaken a collaborative venture that offers an approach for other IHEs to consider in effectively preparing students for the complex and diverse system of care they will soon be entering as professionals.

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