

IPE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is University of Washington Health Sciences?

University of Washington Health Sciences comprises six schools: Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health and Social Work. Each is nationally recognized for excellence in teaching, research and professional training. Together, the schools are committed to training health professionals who will work collaboratively to improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities.

What is interprofessional education at UW Health Sciences?

Interprofessional education (IPE) emphasizes health professionals learning with, from and about each other so that they are skilled in working collaboratively to improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities.

The University of Washington Board of Health Sciences, made up of the deans of UW's six health sciences schools, has put forward the UW Health Sciences Interprofessional Education Initiative, which promotes a collaborative approach to teaching and training health professionals. That approach includes a coordinated curriculum, shared classroom experience, team-based practice and cooperative research among the University's health sciences schools.

The goal of the initiative is to prepare graduates of UW Health Sciences to work in concert with professionals from diverse disciplines dedicated to improving the health and well-being of individuals and communities locally and globally.

What is UW Health Sciences' IPE vision?

To be a world leader in training health professionals to address tomorrow's health challenges and needs.

What is the mission of UW Health Sciences' IPE initiative?

To advance the health of individuals and communities by integrating and transforming the learning experience across the University's six health sciences schools—Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health and Social Work.

What are the key messages that support the vision and mission?

- The health issues of the 21st century span all the health sciences. To address them, UW health sciences students, teachers and researchers must adopt a team-based, cross-discipline, integrative approach to the education and training of health professionals at the University.

- By restructuring the curriculum, facilities and approaches to training and education among the health sciences schools, the University will better equip the schools' graduates to meet the challenge of ensuring the well-being of individuals and communities locally and globally.

What does “transforming learning for tomorrow’s health professional” mean?

Transforming learning for tomorrow’s health professional is the objective of the UW Health Sciences Interprofessional Education Initiative. Sponsored by the deans of the six health sciences schools, the multiyear effort seeks to transform health sciences education at UW and advance health and well-being by focusing on cross-discipline teamwork to benefit the people served.

The initiative’s objectives:

- Better integrate the curricula and training opportunities for faculty, staff, students and other trainees across the University’s health sciences schools.
- Enhance the training and practice programs—such as rotations, mentorships and field work—that focus on collaboration.
- Create built environments—including a new health sciences building—that encourage formal and informal interaction among students and faculty of the University’s health sciences schools.
- Provide an educational environment that keeps the University’s health sciences schools and students ahead of the knowledge curve in the health services environment and its complex local, regional, national and global health challenges.
- Ultimately, UW health sciences students will learn across health disciplines, drawing upon multiple skill sets, research and training. When they graduate, they will have a collaborative, integrated, team-based foundation to help them solve the health issues of the 21st century.

How will the IPE initiative benefit individuals, families and communities?

When health professionals work only in their respective areas of expertise, they miss opportunities to share knowledge and context. In addition, a noncollaborative approach is often less efficient and more expensive and can adversely affect health. The interprofessional education initiative is committed to changing that culture so that the focus among health professionals is on working together for the benefit of the people served.

Effective team-based education serves not only individuals but the community as well. The goal of the Health Sciences IPE initiative is to ensure that collaborative practice with a focus on teamwork is the norm. That will entail creating systems and policies that lead to improved health outcomes, a more efficient and better health care system, communities that better sustain well-being, and a better patient experience.

How does interprofessional education support the goals of the federal Affordable Care Act?

As more citizens become insured and gain access to the health care system through the Affordable Care Act, there will be a need for different professions to work together to improve the delivery of care. New reimbursement models will affect how care is organized. Accountable Care Organizations and patient-centered medical homes will require team-based care. The IPE initiative addresses the ACA by training UW health sciences students in team-based care and providing opportunities for them to learn from, with and about each other to deliver better care more efficiently.

How will interprofessional education in UW Health Sciences be implemented?

Implementation will occur in two- to three-year phases over the next decade. We are now in the planning stage.

Phase 1 began September 2013 with expansion of existing integrative education events into an integrated curriculum that involves the six health sciences schools.

Phase 2 will start in September 2015 with expanded implementation of piloted IPE projects such as field education and community service learning.

In addition, governance, facilities and financing are in close coordination to meet the needs of current and emerging outcomes of interprofessional education and will scale accordingly.

Why undertake this initiative now?

Since the 1990s, faculty members from various health sciences schools at the University have advanced initiatives that promote practical education opportunities that combine the respective skill sets required in each field. In 1997, UW established the Center for Health Sciences Interprofessional Education, Research and Practice with funds from the University of Washington Initiative Fund. The center was expanded in 2002 with funding from The Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation. As a result, UW Health Sciences has been a national leader in health sciences interprofessional education. Until now, however, we have not had a formal IPE effort supported by the deans of all six health sciences schools.

Based on the public's needs and the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, now is the time to align UW health professions education with the national priority of improving access to health care and improving the quality, safety, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of health care.

Transforming learning for tomorrow's health professionals will allow UW Health Sciences to better respond to the rapidly changing and increasingly complex global health environment and evolving consumer needs, and ensure that UW Health Sciences remains a national leader in team-based education and able to attract the most forward-thinking students and faculty.

Full implementation of interprofessional education in the health sciences schools requires new and refined teaching and learning skills, curriculum transformation, teachers and practitioners who think and act interprofessionally, and an innovative approach to new and existing learning spaces. It also requires engaging our campus and community partners.

How can I help?

The interprofessional education initiative requires commitment from UW students and faculty, community leaders, the mentors of our students and trainees, and those who employ our graduates.

Please consider helping to improve the education of health sciences professionals, the delivery of health services, and the well-being of communities by becoming involved in one or more ways:

- Participate in the monthly curricular workshops being offered by IPE.
- Become an IPE faculty advocate.
- Connect with your academic councils on teaching and learning.
- Join a student group committed to IPE.

For more information, contact Dionne Foster at dionnesfoster@gmail.com.