



History and Purpose of the Waldron College Interprofessional Education and Practice Symposium

Waldron College of Health and Human Services

In August of 2011, at the opening meeting of the Waldron College of Health and Human Services, the college administration encouraged the faculty to develop an interdisciplinary event that would engage students and faculty from each of the five professional healthcare related programs within the college. This charge reflected the goals of the administration, faculty, and staff of each Waldron College school and department, each of whom endeavor to educate health and human services professionals to competently serve in their own disciplines while professionally engaging with other health care and human services providers to ensure best practices for patients and clients. These goals of improving interdisciplinary communication and collaboration were also identified in the 2001 Institute of Medicine Report, *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century*, and *Healthy People 2020* report as critical to providing safe and excellent health and human services care.

The first Waldron College Interdisciplinary Symposium took place in the Spring of 2012, with approximately 100 students and faculty from all five of the Waldron College programs, including Communication Sciences and Disorders, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Social Work. In the Fall of 2012, a faculty member from the School of Teacher Education and Leadership became involved, and both faculty and students in Early Childhood Education joined the Symposium events in Fall 2013 and 2014. Since 2011, the concepts involved in learning and working with others across disciplines have evolved and the term “interprofessional” is now widely accepted as the most accurate terminology to describe the collaborative nature of these interactions and exchanges of ideas. During the same timeframe, Waldron College began holding an interprofessional event emphasizing scholarship and research, the annual Waldron College Interprofessional Symposium and Expo, prompting the name change for the present learning event and highlighting the purpose and learning experiences emphasized at the Interprofessional Education and Practice Symposium. In the Fall of 2015 and the Fall of 2016, over 180 students and 35 faculty moderators from seven disciplines, including Communication Sciences and Disorders, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Social Work, Nutrition/Dietetics, and Early Childhood Education participated in the Waldron College Interprofessional Education & Practice Symposium (WCIPEPS). This fall, the program continues to grow! On November 3, 2017, more than 225 students and 50 faculty moderators from seven RU disciplines, including the addition of both students and faculty from the Doctorate in Psychology and Recreation Therapy programs, will participate in one of TWO events to ensure everyone who is interested will have the opportunity to participate in the annual WCIPEPS.

The primary purpose of the WCIPEPS is to create interprofessional learning opportunities that enable health and human services students at Radford University to better understand their role and the roles of others, and acquire the skills to interact with other disciplines for the benefit of their future patients and clients. These skills include respectful communication, negotiation, advocacy, and leadership. Each year, the WCIPEPS has been approved as a Scholar-Citizen Initiative event, with the aims of fostering critical thinking, making connections between academic knowledge and participation in local and national health and education systems, and problem-solving in the context of contemporary real-world issues.