Interprofessional Education Program Students Participate in “Refugee Experience”

The East Tennessee State University Academic Health Sciences Center (AHSC) completed the third phase of the Interprofessional Education Program (iPEP) for the second cohort in spring 2015. Students from the five colleges within the AHSC and the Departments of Psychology and Social Work have received informative and formative experiences during the first two phases of the program. For their final experience, the Capstone, the entire cohort participated in a daylong experiential program simulating a refugee camp experience under the direction of Dr. Mike Stoots and his team from the College of Public Health.

“I really enjoyed this experience. It was valuable to be able to interact with other professions in person. Our team worked well together and it felt like everyone had a chance to demonstrate their skills. Today was fun and I feel that everyone not only had a good day, but also learned from one another.”

“The experience was very thought-provoking. I felt challenged to go outside my comfort area and apply myself in new ways.”

“…I thought the diversity between scenarios covered a wide set of skills necessary for teamwork.”

“I liked the whole experience, the planning behind it and setting was just perfect.”

More than 50 students were divided into interprofessional teams, each responsible for creating their own “mini-camp” needed for the refugee camp. Throughout the day, multiple scenarios were presented in the form of refugees that required the students to address issues of ethical dilemmas, clinical/medical problems, as well as division of labor decisions. Teamwork and problem solving skills were paramount to each mini-camp’s success. Each mini-camp had at least one faculty observer who was responsible for observing the activities and providing constructive feedback to the teams. During the “active phase” of the camps, students were responsible for recording (with pictures/videos taken with their smart phones) examples of the challenging scenarios, which were sent to a common place within Valleybrook to be used during the final debriefing session at the end of the day. Scenarios utilized scripted actors to simulate the experience as realistically as possible. A video of the experience may be viewed here.

The entire group came together for a debriefing session in the final hour of the experience when the “take home points” and “aha moments” were presented by the individual mini-camp groups. Students indicated they enjoyed the opportunity to meet and work with people from other professions through diverse, unannounced scenarios as part of a multidisciplinary team. They appreciated the planning behind the event and the setting. Many of the students felt they gained teamwork, communication, and problem-solving during their collaborations to solve a practical, real challenge. Students also provided meaningful feedback to inform future experiences at Valleybrook.