Health Care Administrators have a responsibility for legislative involvement based on the connection the field has with both state and federal funding. This career responsibility is crucial with the Health Care Reform. Legislative involvement is developmentally impressed upon the students of University Wisconsin-Eau Claire’s Health Care Administration program. This research and development project seeks to further measure factors that lead to legislative involvement during their practicum. This project uses previous research, online data collection, and student surveys with the current practicum students in our program. The collection and analysis of data from current practicum students this year will be used. The students on practicum were required to participate in two of the following: set up absentee voting for residents; help the facility become a polling site; participate in an effort to encourage staff to vote; research new bills involving health care; coordinated meeting with ombudsmen; invite or coordinate a legislator facility visit; or participate in a related legislative activity or event for the organization. The students on practicum this year will be surveyed on which legislative activities they participated in, and why. A past survey of practicum students showed that students participation is driven by personal interests, course expectation, and preceptor guidance. This study will further explore these factors and how they may influence the degree of current student involvement in a variety of legislative experiences. We will also report on the number and type of student engagement in legislative activities during their practicum experience.

**Methodology of Study**

The following approaches have established the foundation of significant results towards improving and enhancing legislative advocacy amongst practicum students. The survey conducted had been previously used, just with a little different emphasis.

An initial extensive literature review, and feedback from focus groups helped us frame our approach and put forward the initial three core connection areas.

A survey was conducted with the current practicum student population to assess the three core factors significant of legislative advocacy and their level of involvement.

This survey was also shared with the health care associations and the UW-Eau Claire political science department for additional feedback.

- **Student**
- **Field Experience**
- **Legislative Activity**

**Factors**
- Personal, Preceptor
- University

**Survey Analysis & Results**

There was a 33% increase between 2013 and 2014. Practicum students have the option to participate in the following activities: set up absentee voting for residents at facility; contact a local congressman; attend a local, public legislative session; encourage staff to vote; research new bills involving health care; write a letter to a legislator; coordinate a meeting with an ombudsmen; become a polling site; invite a legislator to facility; and attend a political speech or rally. Students participated in 33% more of those activities in 2014 than they did in 2014.

**Factors Affecting Involvement**

The following factors have established the foundation of significant results towards improving and enhancing legislative advocacy amongst practicum students:

- Career Preparation
- Personal Interest
- Preceptor
- Faculty Sponsorship
- Family Member Support
- Advocacy Organization
- On-Campus Organization

**Influence of Activities**

- **NOT AT ALL**
- **LITTLE EXTENT**
- **SOME EXTENT**
- **GREAT EXTENT**

**Practicum Student Involvement in Legislation**

**Presented by:** Bridget Staberg
**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Douglas Olson, Ph.D

**Preliminary Recommendations**

The first concept was creating politically aware and active students by starting earlier in the development of students. On-campus students should be exposed to the process, influence, and priority of legislative advocacy. The survey showed that many students do not take a political science class, which could be encouraged. Resources such as ACHICA’s Grassroots Advocacy Guide are provided to students in courses, but could be emphasized even more. Practicum students also have leadership projects that they must create and implement. One of these leadership projects or activities could be focused on legislation and advocacy. The development of politically aware and active students must start earlier in the process. The main focus was further the process to encourage and assess legislative advocacy and standardize it for Practicum students. This year the use of a required set of activities, along with a list of potential activities with a minimum completion has seemed to produce greater participation. Some other future recommendations include more involvement on campus before students get out to practicum.

**Next Steps and Conclusion**

Currently we only have two different samples. In order to further this study, there may need to be surveys for the next few cohorts to find out how much the legislative activity benefits practicum students, and how much more activity they chose to participate in. Overall this follow up survey showed that the legislative activity increased over this year. The legislative activity checklist (required activities) did indeed work, and created more involvement with practicum students.

The findings of this project and developing profile are useful in understanding what conditions prepare practicum students for legislative involvement, and how the HCAD department can better prepare students to become more involved. It also suggests that there is no one standard approach to encourage legislative advocacy for students and their respective settings. In conclusion, the research suggests that there are factors based on students perceptions that encourage advocacy. We can produce more effective and out reaching administrators by considering these factors in student’s development.

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