Healthy People 2020 and Education For Health  
Successful Practices in Undergraduate Public Health Programs

Kingsborough Community College, City University of New York  
Brooklyn, NY  
Community Health  

Major: AS degree with three areas of concentration  
http://www.kingsborough.edu/academicDepartments/hper/Pages/com.aspx  
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INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Founded in 1965, Kingsborough Community College (Kingsborough), part of the City University of New York (CUNY), is a comprehensive public community college. Its mission is to prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions and to provide career development, general education, adult and continuing education, and related support services. Though located in New York City, Kingsborough is not your typical inner city college; it is located on a 70-acre campus on Manhattan Beach, a peninsula on the southern tip of Brooklyn, and overlooks Sheepshead Bay, Jamaica Bay, and the Atlantic Ocean.

As Brooklyn’s only community college, Kingsborough provides college courses, Associate degree programs, remediation courses for students not qualified to enter 4-year colleges, and continuing education for adults, and professional development classes and certificate programs for over 17,000 credit students and an additional 20,000 continuing education students annually. Half our degree students are full-time, and half are part-time; there has been an increase of 15% in the number of part-time students in the last few years. About 60% of students are female and 40% are male. Students speak 74 different languages and come from 110 different countries. The ethnic breakdown of the student population is: African American/Black: 32.0%; Asian/Pacific Islander: 12.4%; Caucasian/White: 41.1%; Hispanic: 14.4%; Other: 0.1%. Nearly 80% of Kingsborough graduates go on to 4-year colleges and more than 70% of KCC graduates earn their bachelor’s degrees.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The Kingsborough Community Health A.S. degree program, following the traditional program development, department, college, university, and state education department review process, was launched in the Fall of 1986. The concept of an A.S. degree in Community Health within the college’s Health, Physical Education and Recreation (HPER) Department was conceived and developed by Professor Patricia Hazlwood who had graduated from the Community Health Sciences masters degree program at Hunter College, CUNY.

Dr. Hazlwood felt that an entry-level frontline professional preparation program could be launched at Kingsborough and serve as a pipeline into CUNY and private school BS in Public Health and/or Community Health programs in New York City. She was guided by her belief that public health promotion and disease prevention work could begin with students trained at the community college level. Students would be prepared with two goals: (1) to take on front-line, grassroots health promotion and disease prevention tasks and, (2) continue on to earn at least a BS degree in public or community health. Given the emergence of HIV/AIDS in New York City and the demand for a properly prepared public health workforce at this time, Dr. Hazlwood felt it would be important to begin formal public health career academic preparation as early as possible. She believed that a carefully chosen group of core community health competency-based courses and a limited number of health education courses could provide students with basic skills and information that could prepare them to further study public health in four-year colleges and take on entry-level front line public health work upon graduation. Given the growing concern about
HIV transmission in New York City, the need to infuse the community with street smart educators was a compelling incentive to launch a community health program at the community college level.

The plan was to identify potential public health practitioners from the community who could connect with community members and help achieve public health health promotion and disease prevention goals at the community level as soon as possible. Dr. Hazlewood proposed the development of a Community Health degree program to HPER chairperson, Dr. Samuel Scherek, who supported the idea whole-heartedly and provided the support and guidance necessary to gain program approval at the departmental, campus, university, and, finally, state level. Though the program curriculum has evolved over the years, the underlying commitment remains not only unchanged but reaffirmed: to prepare competent and caring community members to help their neighbors help themselves and to educate health care providers about community needs and specific health education and care strategies needed to increase the likelihood of key lifestyle and behavior changes.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Kingsborough’s Community Health A.S. degree is housed in the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. It is housed here because it originated here and because the Department was already the source of the college’s health education courses. It has stayed here because the department has a passionate commitment to the program.

In support of the program, the existing core group of health subject matter expert faculty was expanded to include faculty with formal community health, community health sciences, and health education training. The Community Health Program faculty is now a core group of five professors; all have doctorates in health education, public health, or community health. Typically, each faculty member covers one of the required Community Health core courses to make certain that the entire faculty team gets to meet with and interact with all Community Health majors.

In addition, the program has a team of dedicated adjuncts – current community health practitioners and leaders - hired to teach some of the health education concentration courses. All new hires are expected to have their doctorates, and as the program moves toward changing its name to Public Health, faculty will be expected to have an appropriate Public Health related masters degree and doctoral degree. Once hired, all faculty are encouraged to participate in the college’s Teaching Toolbox Faculty Interest Group, to have taken a Train the Trainer course, and to belong and be actively involved in the local Public Health Association. Faculty are urged to use the latest in technology to enhance their teaching and to involve students in extracurricular activities.

Over the years, the program has been directed either by a single individual, as it is now, or co-directed by two faculty members – depending upon the faculty members’ schedule. With over 140 students requiring advisement and academic support, having co-directors has worked particularly well.

The Community Health Program collaborates with a variety of partners at a variety of levels; this section features recent collaborations.

Departmental Collaborations: The Community Health Program has partnered with the college’s Continuing Education Department to bring a number of programs (Community Health Worker Training, the Family Development Credential, Public Service Career Alternatives) into the college with the intent that successful completion of the courses would result in college credit “banked” to be used toward a Community Health degree if the continuing education student matriculated as a Community Health major. The program also collaborated with the Continuing Education Department to bring a “Paired Care” training program to community members and community health students interested in learning how paid and
unpaid caregivers can best work together to provide quality services to homebound seniors. We collaborated with the Behavioral Science Department to offer a substance Abuse Counseling concentration for our students, with the Biology Department to offer a special Bridge Program to facilitate transfer into the Health Science and Nutrition program at the nearby four-year Brooklyn College, with the Health Services Department to offer blood pressure screening for all our health promotion class students, with the English Department to make two of our core courses writing intensive, with the Art Department to produce posters and program booklets for our health leadership conference, with the Honors Program on field trips to Historic Richmondtown and the Museum of Sex, and with many of these and other departments to bring our Smoke-Free Entranceways campaign into classrooms across campus.

Academic Collaborations: Kingsborough’s Community Health Program has articulation agreements with New York City College of Technology (Health Services Administration degree program) and St. Joseph’s College – both in Brooklyn – and York College, in nearby Queens, NY. We are working to formalize our excellent relationships with Brooklyn College, Lehman College, and Hunter College (all CUNY colleges) which have accepted our students. We have collaborated on a CUNY System-wide Community Health Worker Basic Training Working Conference at LaGuardia Community College.

(CUNY) in Queens, and worked with Hostos Community College (CUNY) in the Bronx and LaGuardia again to assess borough specific Community Health Worker training needs. We have worked with SUNY Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn College, Medgar Evers College (CUNY) and St. Francis College in the planning and offering, over the past six years, an annual public health leadership conference. One of our most recent collaborations was with St. Francis College – a group of Kingsborough Community Health students was trained in preconception health peer education by the US Office of Minority Health and then developed and offered a two-day training on preconception health to Kingsborough and St. Francis College students at St. Francis College in downtown Brooklyn. This led to the same students giving a presentation on their peer education experience at St Francis College’s national Women’s Health and Technology conference.

Community Collaborations: Through our Community Health Advisory Board of community health agency representatives which has important input into our curriculum and our 100 hour health education internship program we have partnered with over two dozen local community health organizations. We have worked with the Public Health Association of New York City (PHANC), promoting membership and submitting abstracts for and giving for the past three years, presentations at the annual PHANC Student Conference. Similarly, students have submitted abstracts and given presentations at both the national Society for Public Health Education and the American Public Health Association annual meeting. The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is also a frequent partner as an internship site and as a training provider to exceptional students. The program is a member of the Greater Brooklyn Health Coalition and students attend meetings regularly, and the campus has belonged to the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health.

CURRICULUM

The goals of the Community Health Program are to prepare students for entry-level front line public/community health positions and transfer to a related four year college program. This is in keeping with the college’s mission of preparing students for transfer and to become responsible, contributing members of society. Every semester, the faculty meets with the Community Health Program Advisory Board to assess employers’ needs and the program’s responsiveness to the changing health promotion and
disease prevention environment. Every five years, for accreditation, we prepare a self-study and have a site visitor meet with program faculty, students, and alumni.

Essentially started from scratch, with a few health education courses retained in the health education concentration curriculum, the program has evolved over the past 25 years and will continue to do so to be responsive to and to anticipate community health workforce needs. Because we are an A.S. degree program (rather than an AA or AAP program), at least 30 of our degree credits must be in the Liberal Arts. This is done deliberately to facilitate transfer to a four year college and to open the door to as many career choices as possible. Students must complete at least 60 credits to graduate.

In the Community Health major, the five required community health (soon to be renamed public health) courses are: (1) Introduction to Community Health; (2) Critical Issues in Community Health; (3) Epidemiology; (4) Community Health Interventions; and (5) Concepts in Wellness. Because health education and promotion students are most employable in their area of specialization upon graduation, they must successfully complete a 100 hour internship experience and seminar class.

The major includes a choice of one of three concentrations each of which requires nine additional credits: Health Education and Promotion (two health education courses and fieldwork); Health Administration (Fundamentals of Business; Organizational Behavior and Management; Macroeconomics or Microeconomics); Gerontology (Introduction to Gerontology; Therapeutic Recreation for Individuals with Disabilities; Perspectives on Death and Dying); and Substance Abuse Counseling (Introduction to Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counseling; Basic Counseling Techniques in Substance Abuse Field; Ethics and the Counselor/Client Relationship in Substance Abuse Counseling).

There are no major electives, though there are college Liberal Arts electives. The program recommends that students take Public Speaking and Ethics for Health Professions as electives.

Service Learning and civic engagement are important at Kingsborough. Twenty hours of service learning are required as part of the core Community Health Interventions course. Students are expected to apply what they have learned about community health promotion methods on campus and in local organizations. They do outreach, group presentations, print materials evaluation, home visits, advocacy visits, built environment assessments, and informal interviewing.

Off-site preceptor preparation is available through the campus’s Service Learning Office.

Students in the Health Education and Promotion concentration complete a 100 hour field work experience which is envisioned as a capstone experience. Whenever possible, a capstone experience is negotiated, including needs assessment – including local data analysis, goals and objective setting, resource development, intervention/presentation design, delivery and evaluation. If the host agency has a more limited, specific, immediate need, that request is honored. All five core courses listed above are open to non-majors.

**STUDENTS**

The program’s goal is to have an annual enrollment of 250 majors; it now has approximately 140. About 60% of the majors are in Health Administration, 30% are in Health Education and Promotion, 8% are in Gerontology and 2% are in Substance Abuse Counseling. The demand of providing quality student instruction, services, and support is well met.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

What the Program Does Well: The Kingsborough Community Health Program has excelled in the personalized attention is provides to all students. Working closely with the advisors throughout the
college, we provide up to date, caring information and support. Listening to the market has been a major success in curriculum development and student satisfaction. We have also learned the importance of extracurricular activities in generating and sustaining interest in the field and classwork; each semester we publish a calendar of local, state, and national professional development events and take students to as many of these events as possible – usually with support from the college or funds raised by other Program events such as the annual leadership conference. Finally, giving students their “head” and letting them run with projects in their own way pays enormous dividends. To watch them create programs, posters sessions, and presentations is one of the most gratifying outcomes for faculty.

Challenges: Challenges include maintaining academic rigor and promoting student involvement in extracurricular activities as they struggle to juggle the multiple demands of their personal, work, and academic lives. As a community college, another challenge is other institutions’ attitudes toward our courses. Our degree classes are outcomes based, rooted in professional competencies, and comparable to any freshman and sophomore courses. They are not remedial. Other institutions and employers must be helped to see that a community college-based academic program is not a vocational program. It is an academic program that provides a gateway to various career opportunities in public health.

Future Program Plans: The most immediate plans are to change the name and focus to Public Health from Community Health and to hire full-time and part-time faculty with public health degrees. Other plans include using continuing education certificate programs (Community Health Worker training and Family Development Credential training) as gateway classes into the major, increasing the number of majors and increasing the number of articulation agreements with colleges with BS programs in public health.

Other Lessons Learned: Never underestimate the power of a motivated student no matter what their challenges.

Advice to other colleges interested in developing public health programs: Please do it. There is a tremendous need for entry-level front line public health workers. Reach out to nearby community colleges and set up an articulation agreement with the college community health or public health program as a feeder school into your four-year program. Accept the value of community college courses – when they are not specifically remedial, they are on a par with freshman and sophomore level courses at four-year colleges. Know what the workforce demand is locally and develop a program that addresses those needs.