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**Education Aiming at Collaboration and Integration of Health and
Social Services: Implementation of Interprofessional Education**



Saitama Prefectural University
Collaboration and Integration of Health and Social Services

Collaboration and integration

Interprofessional education
(IPE)

Interprofessional work
(IPW)

The challenges faced by today's health and social services are becoming increasingly complicated. It is now necessary for the involved professionals to work in collaboration with those from other disciplines and provide integrated care to patients and service users. For this reason, collaboration and integration are the underlying principles of all education at Saitama Prefectural University (SPU).

SPU aims to turn its students into high-quality health professionals who have understood and experienced the necessity of working in close cooperation with health professionals from other disciplines.

Since its establishment in 1999, SPU has consistently been offering the courses, such as **interprofessional collaborative courses**, to accomplish its aims. The university provides opportunities for students to learn from each other beyond the boundaries of their departments in the course of **Interprofessional Work**, and uses the problem-solving approach to foster the ability of students to think independently. In addition, SPU provides opportunities for students and faculty members to participate in community activities and international exchange programs. Thus, based on the principle of **interprofessional education**, SPU has created an educational framework for achieving collaborative and integrated health and social services.

Saitama Prefectural University

<http://www.spu.ac.jp>

Overview of Saitama Prefectural University

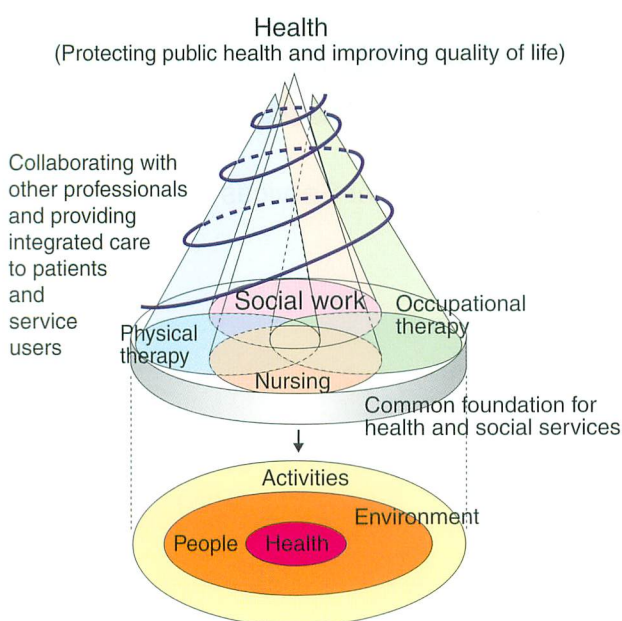
Saitama Prefectural University (SPU) was founded in April 1999 with the aim of offering education for the development of highly qualified professionals capable of meeting the 21st century challenge of providing diverse health and social services to an aging society with low birth rate and capable of responding to new advances in healthcare. The university has a single faculty (the School of Health and Social Services) consisting of four departments (Nursing, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Social Work) with a total of 670 students.

Collaboration and integration as educational goals

Since its inauguration, SPU has focused its efforts on providing students with a systematic education for collaboration and integration in order to foster professionals who can incorporate this philosophy into actual health and social services.

The United Kingdom has a progressive approach in this field and has already introduced interprofessional education (IPE). SPU's educational approach, which is based on collaboration and integration, is an implementation of IPE.

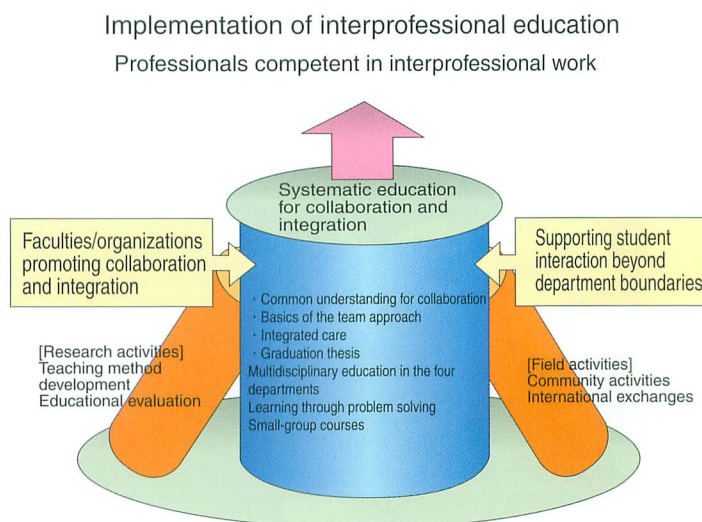
Figure 1. Collaboration and integration of health and social services



Implementation

The curricula contain **interprofessional collaborative courses** that enable students to learn the basics of the interdisciplinary approach for providing collaborative and integrated care to patients and service users. Students are also given opportunities to participate in a variety of **community activities** and **international exchange programs** where they can get hands-on experience and gain an understanding of the importance of collaboration and integration through practical activities. In addition, the basic principles of the University are supported through multidepartmental **research activities** to evaluate the methods and results of interprofessional education and the **adviser system** to promote student interactions beyond the boundaries of departments.

Figure 2. SPU's approach to collaboration and integration



Implementation of interprofessional education
Professionals competent in interprofessional work

Systematic education for collaboration and integration

Interprofessional collaborative courses

The most important feature of the curriculum is the presence of interprofessional collaborative courses (figure 3).

Figure 3. Interprofessional collaborative courses

First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year
General education courses			
Department basic courses/ Department specialized courses			
Interprofessional collaborative courses			

The aims of the interprofessional collaborative courses include helping students develop a shared knowledge base and a common understanding of technologies beyond boundaries of departments so that they can work in teams to respond to patients and service users and provide integrated care.

Field activities: Joint practicum for the four departments

The field activities course, which refers to the joint practicum for the four departments, is a mandatory course for 1st-year students. It aims to provide a

basic understanding of person-to-person care, which is the common foundation for health and social services.

Students work with their peers and faculty members from other departments in actual health and social service provision settings and learn the basics of collaboration and integration through practical hands on experience.

The course evaluation has shown a high level of satisfaction with the course, with an average rating of 87.4 points on the 100-point scale in 2004. Many students indicated that they became aware of the commonalities across disciplines, especially with regard to understanding and attending to patients and service users. The course was also evaluated positively by the sites receiving students, with many sites indicating that it served as a catalyst for the introduction of interprofessional training at the sites.

IPW Exercise for 4th-year students

The course of Interprofessional Work (IPW) is designed for 4th-year students as a part of their research activities. After completing the major part of their professional practical training, students from four different departments form a team and determine how to treat a particular patient. When working on a case as a group, the students have discussions presenting different viewpoints to understand the patient. Even though their basic professional approaches are different, they can exchange opinions, understand each others' approaches, and finally arrive at shared common goals for care. During this process, the students become aware of and can redefine their own professional identities and they develop a deeper understanding of the roles of other professionals. In this way, the IPW course fosters mutual professional understanding.

Discussion during the IPW Exercise



Hands-on experience for collaboration and integration

Community activities

One example of community activities is a health promotion campaign for the elderly in rural areas, carried out as a part of research activities. This systematic program, in which students and faculty members of various departments work together, has brought positive results in the form of collaborative and integrated services and has produced tangible contributions, including measures to prevent elderly people from falling.

International exchange

SPU has various international exchange programs. In one work-study program, students and faculty members from different departments work together at an institution for disabled children in Korea. Another interdisciplinary students and faculty exchange program for increasing the understanding of collaboration and integration is a program at the University of Queensland in Australia.

Adviser system

One faculty member is assigned to 12 to 13 students from various departments and supports their campus life. This system contributes to building of a foundation for collaboration and integration by providing opportunities for interaction and discussion among students from different years and different departments.

Faculty

A great number of faculty members are involved in the interprofessional collaborative courses; thus, the faculty organization responsible for the administration of these courses also serves as an organization for promoting collaboration and integration. In addition, the research activities conducted by interdisciplinary project teams of faculty members serve as a driving force for forming a consensus toward collaboration and integration and for developing and evaluating teaching methodologies.

Collaboration with international organizations and universities in the field of IPE

The UK is a pioneer in the field of IPE. Saitama Prefectural University has become a member of the UK Centre for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE), which promotes IPE internationally, and collaborates with CAIPE and its member universities. In November 2005, an IPE seminar, with invited researchers in education from the UK as guest speakers, was held at the SPU campus. The seminar was attended by participants from all over Japan.

Toward further enhancement and development

Taking IPE to the next stage

Positive experiences of graduates

As a part of our research activities, we surveyed our graduates in 2004. Those who participated in the focus-group interview indicated that they saw the positive outcomes of their IPE experience in the actual workplace. Common comments expressed included "I realized the need for mutual understanding and self-understanding." "I am able to seek and utilize contributions from different parties in providing care." and "I am trying to follow the principle of patient-centered care."

The graduates also indicated that they appreciated the practical merits of IPE and recognized IPW elements in their current workplaces. The programs have thus been found to be useful by our graduates in actual care activities.

What was learned, viewed one year after graduation
(A compilation of opinions expressed by graduates in a survey)

Ability to seek and utilize contributions from different parties while providing care

- I can recognize the value of mutual assistance.
- Because I have knowledge of interprofessional work, I can make effective use of its advantages.
- I can seek contributions from team members and incorporate them into my work.
- I have realized the merits of interprofessional work.

Following the principle of patient-centered care

- I try to build trustful relationships based on a patient-centered philosophy.
- I work in collaboration through communication with the family.
- I ask for support from other professionals for the benefit of patients.
- I realize that care must be given by a person who can best respond to the patient's needs and that priority should be given to the patient's needs, not professional hierarchies.

Understanding the need for mutual understanding and self-understanding

- In the IPW course, I felt a lack of mutual understanding and realized the need to address the challenge of looking back and reflecting on my actions.
- I have become aware that mutual understanding is the basis of collaboration.

Reform of the university curriculum

It is now 7 years since the establishment of Saitama Prefectural University, and the philosophy of collaboration and integration is accepted and practiced throughout the campus. In 2006, the university will be reorganized and integrated with an affiliated junior college. The IPW Exercise will become a required course in all departments, and programs for collaboration and integration will be expanded further (figure 4).

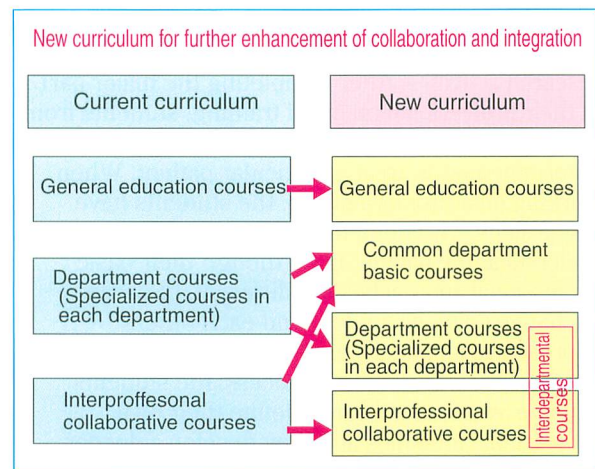


Figure 4. New curriculum starting in 2006

Further development to better serve the community

Saitama Prefectural University has had graduates for three years. An important challenge in the future will be to trace these graduates, who have been trained in the principles of collaboration and integration, to evaluate whether they are engaged in care activities in collaboration with other professionals and whether they provide integrated care to patients and service users. SPU is committed to enhancing its programs to provide IPE in practical settings by integrating education and practice in health and social services, in other words, to developing its courses into continuing education programs for health and social service professionals.

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