

Alumni Perception of the Emerging Health Professionals Dual-Enrollment Program and its Effects on Post-Secondary Education and Career Trajectory

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Alumni Perception of the Emerging Health Professionals Dual-Enrollment Program and its Effects on Post-Secondary Education and Career Trajectory

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INTRODUCTION

The prompt progression of career development has increased the pressure of college and career readiness, thus it has been recognized that alternative options to the traditional U.S. educational model are needed to produce an equipped workforce¹

Since 2005, the Emerging Health Professionals (EHP) program has been serving Lehigh County high school seniors. EHP is a Lehigh Carbon Technical Institute (LCTI) program in partnership with Penn State Lehigh Valley (PSU-LV), Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC), and Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN). The three core components of the EHP program include:

1. Dual enrollment college credits
2. Career Technical Education (CTE)
3. Health care career shadowing opportunities

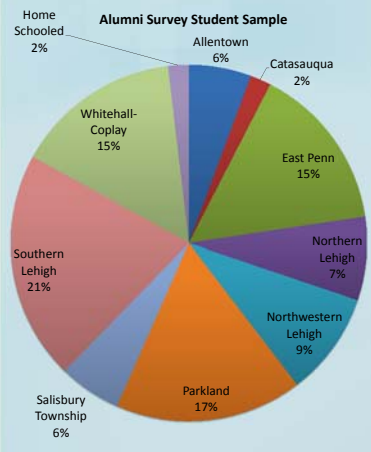
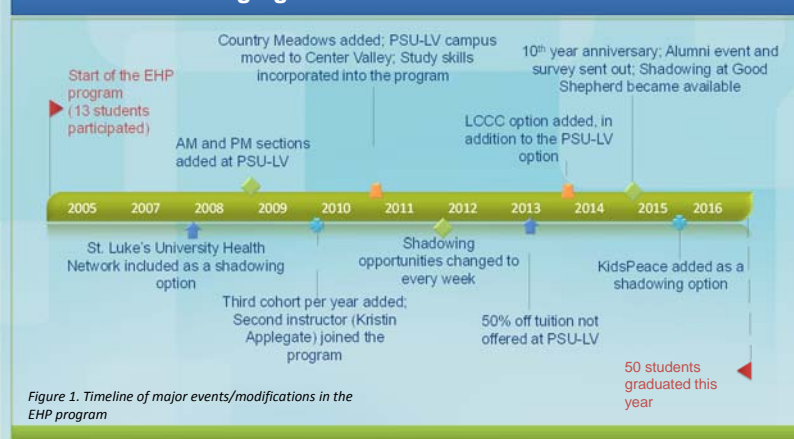
OBJECTIVE: To determine how a decade of changes in the EHP program have affected alumni perception of its effects on post-secondary education and career trajectory. Metrics collected for this study will identify areas for quality improvement of the current EHP program model.

METHODS

- May 2015** A survey was provided to alumni of the EHP program. A total of 53 students participated in the survey.
- June 2016** Qualitative and quantitative data from the survey was analyzed.
- July 2016** Interview protocol was created for alumni interviews to get a first-hand perspective of EHP. A total of 5 alumni were interviewed.
- July 2016** LCCC and PSU-LV dual enrollment representatives were interviewed for further information on college readiness.
- July 2016** LCTI instructors were interviewed to identify changes over the course of the EHP program. All interview data was analyzed.

RESULTS

Emerging Health Professionals Timeline



Drop Out and Economic Rates for Lehigh County School Districts

School District	District Drop Out Rate ²	District Economic Disadvantaged Rate ²	District Free/Reduced Lunch ²
Allentown	5.11%	74.33%	87.42%
Catasauqua Area	0.97%	48.04%	52.36%
East Penn	0.72%	23.44%	22.49%
Northern Lehigh	1.33%	44.42%	42.49%
Northwestern Lehigh	0.36%	14.73%	17.82%
Parkland	0.60%	19.91%	18.53%
Salisbury Township	0.71%	25.32%	31.42%
Southern Lehigh	0.25%	11.24%	11.66%
Whitehall-Coplay	0.64%	47.79%	47.24%

Table 1. Data on district free/reduced lunch from 2014

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2. Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2015). Pennsylvania school performance profile. Retrieved from <http://www.paschoolperformance.org/Search>
3. Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center (2014). Student poverty concentration. Retrieved from https://pennbpc.org/sites/pennbpc.org/files/Student-Poverty-Concentration_1.pdf

DISCUSSION

- **EDUCATION:** The PSU-LV campus change to Center Valley and the addition of LCCC has allowed more students to participate in the program. The implementation of study skills in 2010-2011 helped students transition from high school to college curriculum. Students interviewed described gaining stronger study habits that gave them a "head start" in college.
- **SHADOWING:** Several community partners have been implemented into the program along with LVHN. The wide variety of shadowing opportunities allowed students to discover their interests and dislikes, helping solidify their career choice. This served as a resource when electing a college, major, and profession.
- **DIVERSITY:** Based on the alumni survey and personal interviews, there is a lack of representation from certain school districts. School districts with higher drop out levels, economic disadvantaged rates, and free/reduced lunch had lower student enrollment in EHP.

CONCLUSION

Improvements over time on the EHP program continue to facilitate the link between classroom material and real world career experiences, preparing students for college and the workforce.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

According to alumni feedback and economic disadvantaged rates, students in certain school districts are more prone to encounter financial obstacles. Improving the economic factor of the program by offering financial aid, can increase accessibility for students in underrepresented school districts.

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