

# Student Employment Interview Simulation Project

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# Rationale

- Students who have not had previous employment experience may find it difficult to obtain job interviews
- More importantly, they may have difficulty successfully articulating the skill sets developed during practicum opportunities
- This presentation describes **an innovative participatory learning experience** for social work students which endeavours to prepare them for real-life interdisciplinary employment interviews.

# Literature

- Much of the literature suggests that students in a variety of practice settings report such simulations as extremely beneficial (Hansen et al., 2009; Reddan, 2008)
- Students in simulated interviews can observe their body language, timeliness in terms of answering questions, and also to think about different responses they may like to use in an actual job interview (Hansen et al. 2009)
- In actual interviews, employers are often more focused on the student's level of preparedness and proficiency in terms of interviewing skills than on previous related experience (Perry & Goldberg, 1998).

# Literature

- Even students with a comprehensive resume may struggle in an interview - may lose job to another candidate (Coll & Lay, 2001).
- Features such as confidence level, eye contact, voice moderation and body language are central criteria in hiring decisions (Ayers et al., 1998)
- Simulated interviews expose students to different types of questions and to role-play their answers, while orienting them to the importance of preparedness for professional interviews (Reddan, 2008).

# Project Outline

This project provides students (who also participated in the design) with simulated employment interviews.

- Each student will have 2 videotaped individual interviews:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> with members of the social work department
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> with an interdisciplinary panel of health professionals
  - After each interview, the student receives a CD of their interview and direct/written feedback from the panel
  - There is a time lapse of 2 weeks between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> interview to allow for integration of feedback and self review of the video
- Following the placement - a focus group was held with consenting students to assess the longer-term utility of the process and to suggest improvements.

# Student comments about the project to date

“The mock interview process presented me with the opportunity to practice my interview skills in a safe and familiar environment. I really appreciated being able to test my interview skills while receiving feedback from staff who were familiar with me. I have no doubt that this experience, will allow me to better prepare for future interviews.”

“I gained a lot of insight into the interviewing process within hospitals. The experience and the feedback during this exercise will greatly contribute to preparation for success in future interviews.”

## Student comments about the project to date cont.

“I feel that the simulated interview has been helpful in making me feel more prepared and more confident for real interviews and has also made me aware of what I need to work on, in terms of further improving my interview skills.”

“I thought the questions were very relevant for the position and that the interviewers made me feel comfortable in this setting. I feel that some of the questions were a bit broad and it was hard for me to express what I want to say since I wasn't sure how much detail I should go into or how long I can take for the question. Overall, it was a great learning experience and I can't wait to hear feedback and see the tape!”

# Discussion

- This project will help determine whether simulated employment interviews are a useful addition to the social work practicum.
- If social work students gain comfort and improved interviewing skills by participating in the simulated employment interviews, this model can be used with other social work students as well as students from other disciplines.



# References

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