



## **Professional Development for SPs: A Short Survey of Three Schools**

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A hot topic on the SP Trainer Listserv this past fall was professional development of the SP, with responses from some just beginning the quest, and a few with a well-developed curriculum for their SPs.

With a background in health education in fitness and wellness training, Kewana Smith, an SP Educator for just over a year at U of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, just rolled out guidelines for a certificate program for her ~89 SPs, who are designated "occasional part time help." The enticement to progress to the upper tier as a Certified SP or "C-SP," is an increase in pay, increased training opportunities to further standardize their performance and scoring, and preferred scheduling for OSCEs, among other perks.

Requirements include, but are not limited to, a minimum of six months employment, a monthly minimum number of hours service, an attendance record free of "no calls or no shows," good inter-rater reliability, quality feedback and good peer reviews, as well as attendance at the workshops. "It is a great way to increase the amount of feedback the SPs will get on their performances and grading to help further standardize their portrayal and grading," said Smith.

U of Pennsylvania's Perelman SOM's SP program quadrupled in size since 2006, spurring SPED Denise LaMarra to take on 12 SPs as "program assistants" to aid three FTEs in administration of SP events, training them to train other SPs, manage events, and develop programs for "SP enrichment."

The SP program assistants attend two hour staff meetings held every one to two months, during which published articles on the educational methodology are distributed and discussed, along with issues regarding the training of SPs, including dealing with different personalities, training in groups, mapping out work flow, and other related topics. An hourly pay increase is enjoyed by those participating in the enrichment program.

An "Acting for SPs" course is offered to all, as well as 3-4 general refresher trainings for feedback, annually. "It enriches the whole pool of SPs and the profession," said LaMarra, "and it shows we're different than just hiring actors off the street," which is helpful when working with GME or the Simulation Department, whose events are more complicated and challenging to SPs. LaMarra, however, is not considering a certificate program as an elective effort. "I want my entire pool of SPs to

receive enrichment opportunities throughout the year,” she said, and plans to “continue refining trainings to put everyone through it.”

Perhaps the most developed SP development program we learned about is the five year old certificate program developed by U of South Florida’s Dawn Schocken, director of their Center for Advanced Clinical Learning. With 130 SPs and seven FTEs providing 66,000 student-patient encounters to programs in UGME, GME, Athletic Training, PA, Nursing and Pharmacy, Schocken wanted to challenge and engage her SPs with “continuing professional development.”

While participation in the certificate program is not mandatory, SPs electing to do so must have six months’ active experience in the program, and attend all sessions within a 24 month period. The two to three hour sessions are paid, and offered once a month. The 90 hour curriculum includes 30 hours in educational theory, communication skills, and feedback/evaluation methods; 30 hours in physical exam skills; 15 hours in video review and evaluation; and 15 hours of mentorship of new SPs.

“Everybody is mentored and everybody is paired. We can grow our SP pool faster,” said Schocken, adding, “It also ensures that exams are valid.” SPs can do much of the “coursework” at home via Sharepoint, which is used for capturing data for employees, versus the student-based Blackboard.

Refresher training is available in which the SP is videoed in encounters with “generic learners,” which peers will review. The “generic learners” are four faculty that Schocken mentors for medical education design experience, which allows up to 12 SPs a week to be processed.

While SPs do not get credit hours, Schocken has involved the campus Director of Lifelong Learning so that the school formally recognizes completion of the course work. There is no increase in pay, other than the additional hours spent completing the certificate course work, however the payoff for SPs is increased status with the opportunity to serve as a volunteer in the Ambassador Program for the Admissions Department.

Payoff for the program has been “great success in retaining SPs”—something we’re all interested in, I’m sure! Schocken presented at ASPE 2014 on SP professional development, and plans to submit again for 2015. With this subject such a hot topic, it is likely there will be increased focus on this in the future.