University-Community Partnership to Enhance Public Health Communication

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Objective

The Context of Communicating Care

Communicating health information across diverse populations is critical to improving public health and sustaining health-related practices within a community. In this context, successful collaborations can provide models for effectively sharing essential information in other communities. This panel examines a case where two entities partnered to create visual and written materials for conveying health information to different underserved populations in a rural and economically disadvantaged region (Lincoln Parish, located in north central Louisiana).

Introduction

A Case of Effective Community-Based Collaborations

For this case, the Visual Integration of Science through Art (VISTA) at Louisiana Tech University (Tech) partnered with the non-profit Lincoln Health Foundation to produce image-intensive communication materials for certain local populations. The specific audience was undereducated, indigent, non-native English speaking communities in the Parish – a population that often cannot readily rely on text-based resources for information. For the project, students enrolled in Advanced Digital Painting, Studio Art Internships, or Usability and User Experience Design classes at Tech collaborated with representatives from the Lincoln Health Foundation to

- Conduct research on the communication expectations and preferences of the target audience
- Identify the best methods for sharing information on sensitive health issues with the members of this community
- Develop image-based brochures, website content, and illustrations to convey health information to these populations

These final products students produced included illustrations depicting the health complications associated with diabetes and informational brochures on preventative practices associated with sexually transmitted diseases. In creating this content for the Lincoln Health Foundation, the participants created a model for how community health organizations, educators, and students can collaborate to develop informational products for specific local communities. This proposed panel presentation examines the dynamics of forming such partnerships and collaborating to address the needs of the community population.

Description

The Dynamics of the Case

In this initial pilot, there are two separate but complementary projects where the community partner identified an area of need and Tech students, under supervision of faculty, created either visual images or website and brochure content to improve communication. Specifically, students identified and tested material for dissemination in the community by:

- Identifying prospective solutions/materials that can address this issue
- Researching the intended audience to determine the solution(s) that would work best
- Creating materials for addressing this need (and based on research of audience expectations)
- Testing these materials with members of the related audience
- Presenting suggested materials/solutions to community partners
- Discussing mechanisms the community partner could use to disseminate this information to the intended audience
- The objective of the model was to provide students with hands-on, real-life experiences in
- Project planning
- Project management

• User research
• Product development
• Product planning
• Illustration as a form of communication
• Understanding audience
• Crossing language and cultural barriers

The community partner, in turn, received a needed resource developed specifically to meet the needs of a given population within that community.

Acknowledgement