

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **University of Southern Indiana**

**Editor's Note:** This release and downloadable photo can also be found on our [website](#).

## **USI students, faculty show success in third year of \$1.2 million grant**

Students in the College of Nursing and Health Professions at the University of Southern Indiana have been significantly impacting patient care at several clinical sites as part of a \$1.2 million grant the college received in 2014 from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) division of Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“The goal of the grant project is to teach students from different disciplines how to practice collaboratively as effective members of health care teams, while improving health care delivery,” said Dr. Ryan Butler, project coordinator and data manager. “Upon completion of each semester, we have found our students showed significant improvements in communication, leadership, roles and responsibilities, coordination of care and decision-making.”

Graduate students in Social Work, Occupational Therapy and Nursing and undergraduate students in Respiratory Therapy, Food and Nutrition, Occupational Therapy Assistant and Nursing have been assigned to interprofessional teams to care for veterans and vulnerable and underserved patients at the three USI Community Health Centers (Glenwood, Lodge and Cedar Hall), the Evansville Veterans Administration Medical Center and the Vincennes Community-Based Outpatient Clinic. In the fall of 2016, students will also have clinical rotations at the Owensboro Community-Based Outpatient Clinic.

Many of the patients seeking medical care at these locations have at least one of the following diagnoses: hypertension, diabetes, depression and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. USI faculty and clinic staff coach the teams, focusing on all aspects of primary care delivery, including prevention, diagnosis, treatment, surveillance, health communications and disease management.

“The first year, we had four student teams, and we more than doubled in year two with eight teams each semester,” said Dr. Connie Swenty, project director and assistant professor of nursing. “Now we are beginning year three of the grant, and we have grown to 18 teams each semester. That means we will be able to see more new patients at each site, in addition to scheduling additional follow-up visits with established patients at the clinics or via home visits and phone-calls. This fall, the teams will also incorporate telehealth as an additional follow-up option.”

Butler said that, during focus group discussions, students identified that “working together for a whole semester with clinic staff members fosters teamwork and collaboration and provides a unique learning opportunity. Plus, because of the coordinated care planning and health care delivery as a team, the students feel like they are making a significant impact on patient care. It’s a ‘win-win’ situation for all involved.”

Through the HRSA grant, the USI College of Nursing and Health Professions has become a NEXUS Innovations Incubator. The NEXUS connects health care practice and education creating a partnership

for teaching health professional students. There are 16 states that contain NEXUS sites, and USI is one of two NEXUS sites in Indiana.

The NEXUS is a program provided by the National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education , located at the University of Minnesota. The center provides mentorship to implement, build and evaluate the program.

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*Founded in 1965, the University of Southern Indiana enrolls more than 10,000 dual credit, undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students in more than 80 majors. A public higher education institution, located on a beautiful 1,400-acre campus in Evansville, Indiana, USI offers programs through the College of Liberal Arts, Romain College of Business, College of Nursing and Health Professions and the Pott College of Science, Engineering, and Education. USI is a Carnegie Foundation Community Engaged University and offers continuing education and special programs to more than 15,000 participants annually through Outreach and Engagement. USI is online at [www.usi.edu](http://www.usi.edu).*

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