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Experiential Learning in Graduate Education: Development, Delivery, and Analysis of an Evidence-Based Intervention

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ABSTRACT

Certain expectations are outlined for a young professional with a recently earned doctoral degree. In academia, it is anticipated that graduates will demonstrate the ability to obtain funding, actively engage in an interdisciplinary work environment, and value experiences with critical thinking and problem solving. This paper outlines a unique learning experience of five graduate research students who progressed from the initial stage of research question conceptualization to dissemination of research results. The process included a written research design proposal, grant review process, physical activity program development, intervention delivery, data analysis, and publication of findings. Challenges overcome by these young investigators throughout the research process (i.e. intervention recruitment, development and delivery) are included within the manuscript, as well as other important findings from this process evaluation. The first-hand account of their learning experiences demonstrates the value of promoting internal competition (i.e., within a department, college, university), while working as a collaborative research team to prepare graduate students for 'real-world' research and work-related scenarios. Graduate student faculty mentors should incorporate more opportunities for their students to glean research experience described here.

KEYWORDS

Graduate Education; Experiential Learning; Process Evaluation; Research Reflexivity

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