

Health Coaching Graduate Certificate

Program Policy Statement

Program History

Health care in the United States is undergoing major changes. There is new importance on Modernizing Disease Prevention and Public Health Systems (Subtitle A) as stated in the H.R.3590 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed by the U. S. Senate. Specifically, prevention of chronic disease and improving the health of the public (Title IV) is emphasized (Open Congress). The HR3590 bill signed into law specifically identifies a change that is important to all health care professionals. Section 4001 National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council, calls for a shift in paradigm from one that is disease focused to one of health promotion and wellness. A federal advisory board exploring health promotion models calls for experts in "health coaching".

Research indicates health coaching interventions have had positive health impacts on patient cardiovascular health (Vale et al, 2003), diabetes management, employee health (Okie, 2007), and as a facilitator for healthy behavior adoption and health goal achievement. Health coaching helps client's develop self-care goals, find resources, and collaborate in developing their own solutions to maintain healthy behaviors and guide individuals in positive behavior change. Health Coaching is the practice of health education and health promotion within a coaching context to enhance the wellbeing of individuals and to facilitate the achievement of their health-relate goals (Palmer et al., 2003). Being present in the moment, making better choices, and avoiding old habits allows individuals to pay attention to and focus on improving their quality of life and health. The health coaching approach moves beyond the disease management model to include positive behavior change processes targeted to at-risk individuals at the community and clinical settings (Hess et al., 2007). This clearly describes the model of health coaching we aim to deliver at the University of Delaware.

There are only a few academically based health coaching certification programs (e.g. Harvard, Duke, University of Minnesota), and there is still no "official" standard of preparation. However, health coaching certification is becoming a rapidly required prerequisite for jobs in the health promotion and disease prevention fields. Physicians and health professionals across the Delaware Health Sciences Alliance have voiced concern that many health coaching certification programs lack the academic rigor and preparation to meet the demands of the health care system. Subsequently, they have been extremely supportive in helping the University of Delaware develop a high quality program that would serve as a model for the nation. In this respect, they have partnered with UD to provide practicum opportunities for students in the program. Given the increasing demand for competent health coaches to help fill the current gap in health care, this program is both timely and necessary.

This 18 credit hour Graduate Certificate in Health Coaching has been developed to meet the needs in the state and region for health coaching skills to facilitate better health care delivery, reduce demand for health care, reduce chronic disease burden, and promote quality of life. Specifically, training serves to develop health coaching skills that will:

- Help people clarify their health goals, and implement and sustain behaviors, lifestyles, and attitudes that are conducive to optimal health
- Guide people in their self-care and health-maintenance activities
- Assist people in reducing the negative impact made on their lives by chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes

This graduate certificate program allows students to take courses (18 credit hours) specializing in health coaching to enhance their academic and professional experience. Students may work towards a graduate certificate in addition to pursuing a master's or doctoral degree or students may enroll in this stand-alone graduate certificate program for the purpose of personal and professional development. This Certificate Program has been structured to provide working professionals with the opportunities to enhance their skills and abilities related to their work in health care, wellness, and community health. It also provides them opportunity, if they choose, to apply for admission to the MS Program in Health Promotion. Ease of entry into the MS program is made possible by including courses that fulfill both core requirements and interest electives in the MS program. Structured in this way, the Graduate Certificate Program meets the needs of practicing professionals and traditional graduate students by providing the ability to either enter into a Masters Degree or obtain both a Masters Degree in Health Promotion and Certificate in Health Coaching. In some programs, certificate program course credit can be applied toward a graduate degree. This certificate will prepare professionals who are involved in health care at all levels of prevention: primary, secondary and tertiary. Given the current demand for health coaches in the areas of health care, wellness, and fitness, the program provides the skills and knowledge to work in all three areas based on the undergraduate preparation of the student. Students are required to take all 5 didactic courses, complete 120 hours of supervised practice, and successfully complete a final simulation-based qualifying exam. All courses in the program are based on the socio-ecological model, integrative health care model, bio-psycho-social model, and proven health behavior change theories.

Admission

Students will be admitted to the Health Coaching Certificate Program based upon enrollment availability and their ability to meet the following entrance requirements:

1. A health-related undergraduate degree from an accredited institute of higher education (e.g. behavioral health, nutrition, exercise science, nursing, or related discipline(s)). Health professionals with master's or doctoral degrees may choose to participate in this program. Individuals with a non-health related undergraduate degree but with commensurate and demonstrable experience in behavioral health and/or health care are also eligible to apply.
2. Acceptable undergraduate transcripts
3. Three letters of recommendation indicating the capability, interest, maturity, scholastic, and professional potential of the candidate for graduate study.
4. An application essay.

In accordance with University of Delaware academic policy, matriculated undergraduate students may take 600 level courses as part of their undergraduate course requirements, and apply a maximum of 9 credit hours toward the certificate upon admittance into the program, the only exception being HLPR 664 which can only be completed after all other course work in the program is successfully completed.

Students with a Nursing degree are not required to complete HLPR 605, Concepts of Chronic Disease Management. However they will be required to take one of the following as a substitute course per approval of the Health Coaching academic director:

- HLPR 823 Human Response to Stress
- NURS 622 Advanced Pharmacology
- HLPR 813 Health Psychology
- NTDT 610 Overweight and Obesity Management

Students can apply for admission into the MS in Health Promotion program upon completion of 6-9 credits in the Graduate Certificate program. Fifteen credits in the Graduate Certificate program can then be applied to the MS degree. Only HLPR664, Health Coaching Practicum cannot be applied.

Admission is determined by the Health Coaching Graduate Certificate committee. Qualifications of each applicant are assessed on the basis of a record of success in undergraduate work and potential for success in graduate-level work or demonstrated success in graduate work. If academic deficiencies are identified applicants may be required to take prerequisite courses prior to formal admission. Review of applications and admission are conducted on a rolling basis. Admission into the Graduate Certificate Program can occur after enrolling in graduate courses.

Admission to the graduate program is competitive. Those who meet stated requirements are not guaranteed admission, nor are those who fail to meet all of those requirements necessarily precluded from admission if they offer other appropriate strengths.

Course Requirements for Certificate

The Graduate Certificate in Health Coaching requires 15 credit hours of coursework at the 600 and 800 level, and 3 credits of an internship.

Credit Requirements

HLPR 605 Chronic Disease Management	(3cr)
NURS 615 Integrative Health	(3cr)
HLPR 630 Behavior Change Strategies	(3cr)
HLPR 631 Health Coaching	(3cr)
HLPR 664 Health Coaching Practicum	(3cr)
HLPR 809 Health Behavior	(3cr)
TOTAL CREDITS	(18cr)

Course Substitution Process/Petition

In the event a student seeks to substitute a course for a required course the student must submit a written request explaining the nature and justification of the substitution to the health coaching academic director. The academic director will present this document to the Health Coaching Graduate Certificate Committee for consideration and approval. Approval is granted based on a majority faculty affirmative vote.

Qualifying Exam

Upon completion of the 15 credit hours of didactic course work and the 3 credit hour practicum students must take a qualifying exam to receive a certificate of completion. The exam format involves a 45 to 60 min coaching session with a standardized patient under the observation of two health coaching program faculty. Students will be assessed based on the competencies outlined for the program for individual coaching sessions. Successful completion of the exam is based upon both faculty deeming the student competent in each of the competency areas. In the case where one or both faculty members fail the student, the student will have opportunity to discuss the areas of deficiency with the faculty assessors, and will be provided recommendations for improvement and further study/practice. Students may retake the exam one time within four weeks of their initial test date. If the student fails the exam a second time, they are dropped from the program and do not receive a certificate.

Timetable and Definition of Satisfactory Progress toward Degree

Successful completion of this Graduate Certificate Program requires five 3-credit graduate courses with a minimum grade of B in all courses, a Passing Grade in HLPR 664, and successful completion of a qualifying exam based on full-time or part-time status.

Full-time students are expected to complete their program requirements in a minimum of one calendar year. 9 credit hours will be taken during the Fall semester, 6 credit hours during the Spring semester, and 3 credits over summer 1 and 2 for the Health Coaching practicum. Course loads may vary as appropriate if acceptable winter and summer courses are planned, or if course opportunities and offerings change unexpectedly. However, to remain as a full-time student a minimum of 6-credit hours per semester is required.

Part-time students are expected to complete their program requirements in a minimum of five academic years. Extensions to this timeframe may be requested with a formal letter to the Health Coaching Program academic director. Extensions will be determined by the Health Coaching Graduate Certificate Committee. A majority affirmative vote is required to obtain an extension.

Practicum students (HLPR 664) must satisfactorily complete their requirements in the semester they register for this course. A failure to meet the requirements will disqualify them from completion of the degree. Students do not have automatic opportunity to redo a practicum. In the event of extenuating circumstances, students may withdraw from the course and complete it in another semester, or appeal in writing to the Health Coaching Graduate Committee. Opportunity to redo the practicum will be determined by the Health Coaching Graduate Certificate Committee. A majority affirmative vote is required to obtain permission to repeat the course. A maximum of

one HLPR 664 course repeat is permitted pending Committee approval.

Assessment Plan

Learning objectives for all students completing the program follow:

Coaching Knowledge and Skills

- Students will gain knowledge and skills in motivational interviewing
- Students will gain knowledge and skills in establishing client relationships
- Students will gain knowledge of coaching ethics

Interpersonal Communication Skills

- Students will gain skills in active listening, effective questioning, and direct communication
- Students will gain knowledge and skills in health literacy
- Students will gain knowledge and competencies in cultural diversity

Adult Learning Skills

- Students will gain skills in creating awareness
- Students will gain skills in designing actions and setting goals
- Students will gain skills in managing progress and accountability

Behavior Change Knowledge and Skills

- Students will gain knowledge of theories in behavior change
- Students will gain knowledge and skills of applying behavior change strategies to children and adolescents
- Students will gain knowledge and skills of applying behavior change strategies to adults
- Students will gain knowledge and skills in assessing health behavior
- Students will gain knowledge and skills in gender-based behavior change strategies

Family Dynamics

- Students will gain knowledge and skills in family dynamics and its impact on behavior change

Disease/Illness Management

- Students will gain knowledge in the management of the most common chronic diseases
- Students will gain knowledge and skills related to the use of eating and nutritional and exercise related strategies for improving health

Pharmacological Management

- Students will gain knowledge about the common pharmacological drugs used in the treatment of chronic disease

Integrative Health

- Students will gain knowledge about the holistic approaches to promoting health and preventing disease.

Social Service Knowledge

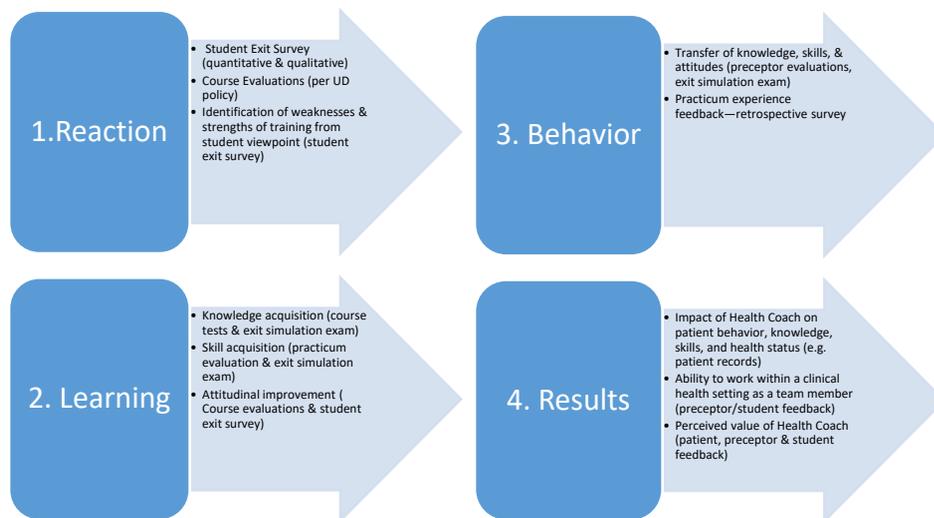
- Students will gain knowledge about how to utilize the social service system to help clients in need receive assistance

Student achievement of these learning objectives will be assessed during and at the completion of each course. In keeping with the applied nature of this program, the majority of assessments will measure application of knowledge and skills in community settings.

The quality and impact of the educational program.

Per Kirkpatrick's levels of training evaluation, assessment of the Health Coaching Certificate program will focus on student reactions to the program (i.e. how well did the program prepare them for the practicum, and as a health coach), student learning of knowledge, skills, and attitudes; behavioral application of knowledge; and impact of the health coach on patient outcomes, health care delivery and value per preceptor and patient feedback. All evaluation will be based on performance standards developed by the committee.

Evaluations will follow a retrospective survey design (as endorsed by Kirkpatrick) per the assessment strategies outlined in *Figure 1* below:



Reaction: to guide future development of the certification program student feedback per coursework they receive (via University of Delaware course evaluations), and a student exit survey identifying what they view (overall) as the strengths and weaknesses of the training in preparing them to work as a health coach will be utilized.

Learning: Establishment of a final simulation exam in which certification candidates must demonstrate through a simulation test the skills, knowledge, and attitudes expected of a health coach. This exam will be observed by program faculty, and will be used to ascertain the abilities of the candidate, as well as identify potential programmatic improvements. The exit survey will be used to determine perceived skill, knowledge gain, and attitudinal change.

Behavior Change: Through the provision of a practicum requirement in a real world setting, candidates will be able to practice what they have learned through the didactic program. A retrospective survey will be employed to assess the students behavioral changes as a health coach, in addition practicum preceptors will provide a candidate evaluation. All candidates will be required to undergo a simulation exam under the observation of two program faculty. Simulation

exams will utilize actors as patients with a pre-determined health history and personality who will serve to create a context for health coach candidates to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and competencies. These exams will take place after the practicum experience.

Result/Outcome: Ultimately, the question that needs to be evaluated is whether the health coach is helping to improve the health of patients, reducing risk, and decreasing demand (i.e., utilization) of health care services either in quantity or cost. Through assessment of patient changes (perceived and actual), preceptor feedback, and health care team input, data will be collected to answer this question.

Financial Aid

No financial support is available for students in this Certificate Program. However students in the Certificate Program who are also enrolled in the MS in Health Promotion program qualify to compete for BHAN departmental teaching, graduate, and research assistantships. Students will be charged an additional fee to cover the cost of the simulation final exam. Cost is associated with hiring actors to act as a client/patient.

Departmental Operations

It is the responsibility of the students to keep the Health Coaching Graduate Certificate academic director and faculty aware of their current contact information. Communication between faculty and students is essential in the program. Students are encouraged to attend professional meetings and conferences. However currently, the Department Behavioral Health & Nutrition provides limited travel funds to such meetings.