Primary Care Paramedic Program Selection Process: Does It Promote Student Success?

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INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The Primary Care Paramedic (PCP) program at the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC) School of Health Sciences (SoHS) trains approximately 200 paramedic students annually. Historically the PCP program was filled by candidates on a "first-come, first-served" basis. That enrolment method generated a lengthy wait list for entry into the program. Some students decided not to wait, and moved on to other programs. Other students who were accepted into the program, were neither academically or emotionally ready to take the PCP program, as was evidenced by the significant number of academic exits and student withdrawals at the conclusion of the first component of the program, the Clinical Science 200 (CS200) evaluations.

In 2010, the PCP program moved to three intakes per year, and developed a process and tools to select candidates into the program that had the best chance of being successful .
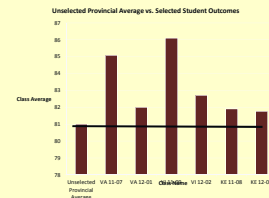
METHODS

We compared academic outcomes, in the form of written evaluations, of the 2010 cohorts with the academic outcomes of the 2011 cohorts that were enrolled through the selection process. We also compared the outcomes of the CS200 exams between the two groups, as the CS200 evaluation has traditionally led to numerous academic exits and student withdrawals. Finally, we looked at the relationship between overall selection scores and overall cohort outcomes.
The data was extracted from our school-wide database, and from our selection tracking tools.

RESULTS

We found an overall increase in the academic scores for each selected cohort, over 2010 students who did not participate in a selection process. We also found an increase in the percent of students who were successful in the CS200 evaluations.
Lastly, we found a correlation between the selection scores, and the overall academic scores for the selected cohorts.
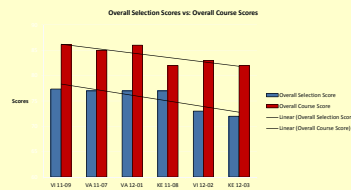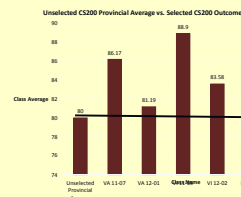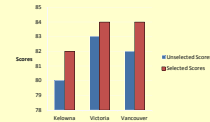
DISCUSSION:

We found an increase in overall scores in the selected 2011 cohorts over the 2010 cohort. We also found increases in the scores at each campus in the 2011 cohorts over the 2010 cohort. When looking at only the CS200 scores, we noticed that each selected cohort at all campuses scored higher than the previous unselected cohorts. We found this to be significant.

Lastly, we found there to be a direct correlation between the selection process scores, and the cohort outcomes at each campus, that is, lower selection scores translated into lower overall scores for that cohort. We feel this correlation validates the selection tools we are using.

Our next steps will be to look at the same data for our Distributed Learning programs, and study the difference in student outcomes between students studying in a part time/online model, versus a fulltime face to face model.

APPLICATION:

The trends discovered in this project will allow us to improve student success in two ways. Further review of the demographics of the students who have achieved the highest selection and overall course scores will allow us to target and focus our marketing efforts. Inversely, recognizing that lower selection scores lead to lower overall scores, we can increase student support to those with lower selection scores and work with them earlier to improve their chances of success.

KEY REFERENCES:

Turner T. (2010) Selection interviewer Training guide. T.S. Turner Consulting Inc.