



Member
Spotlight



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APSCUF = Quality

Clarion's Nancy Falvo

With a strong interest in community health education, Dr. Nancy Falvo directed her degrees in nursing towards community and health promotion. In 2002, she was given the opportunity to take her interest to the next level with the help of the PASSHE chancellor's office and the Department of Health in the development of Clarion University's Health Science Education Center.

One of only four centers in Pennsylvania, Clarion University's HSEC serves nine counties to promote healthy lifestyles through interactive educational programs for school-aged children within a 40 mile radius. Local programs are also delivered for college students and other adults. During the last 3 years, the HSEC has also begun working with the University employees to improve their fitness and nutritional status. Approximately 18,000 grade school students are seen each year during a HSEC program!

"I believe that the PASSHE universities have a responsibility to their communities. Our administration believes this as well. In many communities, the universities are the largest employers," said Falvo. "Partnering with local school districts is a win-win for everyone."

One of the most outstanding programs the HSEC has developed is the Leadership Academy. Approximately 200 minority students across the state participate each year in the Leadership Academy. Acceptance into the Academy is based on student

desire to attend, recommendations from teachers and/or counselors, and parental permission.

Students spend 3-5 days on Clarion's campus where staff is focused on promoting leadership skills in students, decision making, career choices, team building, critical thinking and problem solving.

"The program is providing opportunities that may not have been an option for some of these kids," said Falvo. "We are already seeing that the program is improving graduation rates in some schools offering the Academy, demonstrating changes in behaviors, and increasing the number of students enrolling in college who prior to the Academy did not see themselves here."

As an incentive to participate in the Academy and focus on future goals, students accepted in the Leadership Academy are accepted at Clarion University upon high school graduation. This in turn is a component of Clarion University's enrollment and diversity initiatives. This program would not have been possible without the tremendous support of Clarion University's President Grunenwald and Administration.

Two other statewide programs were developed by Falvo and the HSEC staff including Project X and PA-SWAT. Project X targets students in grades 4-7 to provide an introduction to a comprehensive school based health education curriculum. To date, approximately 40,000 students from across the state have participated in a Project X assembly. PA-SWAT was developed for college campuses to assist students to choose and promote tobacco-free lifestyles and environments in their campus communities. Thirty-seven campuses across the commonwealth are members of PA-SWAT.

In addition to the three statewide programs HSEC has developed themselves; they also took over in 2004 the coordination of the PA DOH's high school anti-tobacco program – BUSTED! Finally, the HSEC conducted research through the Adult Tobacco Survey according to the specifications of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Pennsylvania Department of Health using Clarion University student research assistants.

The HSEC is busy throughout the year making these programs possible by coordinating camps, fitness programs, and educational workshops. "We have a lot of fun doing what we all love to do and it's a wonderful place to be very creative and challenged. Please keep in mind that every program delivered and/or sponsored by the HSEC is completely free – there is no charge for education here." said Falvo.

Falvo also incorporates Clarion University students in HSEC as she hires undergraduate and graduate interns and work study students every semester. Although nursing, education, and other applied science majors are encouraged to apply, Falvo does her best to accommodate reliable and dependable students interested in the program from any field.

In September 2007 the HSEC went through the accreditation process through National Association of Health Education Centers. They became one of the 1st centers in the country to receive accreditation.

"I am extremely proud to have led the accreditation team for the Center," said Falvo. "This was a significant accomplishment for the Center staff, the University and PA DOH."

Nancy Falvo has worked for Clarion University for 20 years and has been a member of APSCUF since her initial hire date. She also represents PASSHE faculty on the Center for Rural PA Board of Directors. "Through APSCUF and our contract, I have been able to manage this grant, become very creative with my "teaching" and maintain faculty status," said Falvo. "This may not have been possible at other universities."



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