The Children's Office of Education is Small--But Impactful

June officially welcomed the new Office of Education to the Children's family. Dr. Russell Buzalko and Megan Sanchez immediately began to collect all forms of data related to the educational opportunities at Children's. This served two purposes, first it painted a picture of the current landscape and, secondly, became the basis of a formal performance improvement study complete with recommendations for the future.

It was quickly obvious that across many specialties and various experience levels, the organization served approximately 1,700 learners per year and that number was continuing to grow. Volume is expected to exceed 2,000 learners per year starting around the New Year. Dr. Buzalko credits the faculty and steadfast support staff for the "phenomenal level of effort and ingenuity in creating the original educational programs."

Shortly after accepting the baton from Dr. John Sparks, creator of the Office of Education, it was clearly noted that the Children's Nursing Education Office was engaged in supporting approximately one-half of the learner population. Now the two education offices work in collaboration to support the diverse cadre of learners and faculty. While the Nursing Education Office existed for approximately 10 years the Office of Education was brand new with the challenge of establishing administrative functions, standardizing where needed, and diversifying where required.

The newness of the office required collaboration with the legal department, medical staff services, HR, and many other offices to ensure all the proper paperwork was in place to support shadows, academic interns, students, residents, and fellows. "The behind the scenes foundational work was not glamorous and might not have been all that obvious to the typical learner or educator...but was required for the proper alignment of educational activities and support of the hospital and medical center," according to Dr. Buzalko. These ongoing efforts reorganized the stage and promoted standardization for learners from medicine, pharmacy, transport, occupational therapy, physical therapy, physician assistants, social work, health care business, and other
specialties. In the end, the Office of Education assumed responsibility for tracking and supporting all educational specialties outside of nursing. As many know, the learners at Children's come from countless states and countries with ties to more than 35 other institutions, with some being on-site for a few hours of observership to others who are there for years of highly detailed training.

On October 1st, the Office of Education combined with the expertise of the Children's professionals already working in Continuing Medical Education, Sara Olsen, and Graduate Medical Education, Carrie Drummond. While previously housed in the capable hands of Medical Staff Services, it was decided the next logical step in the progression of the academic evolution of Children's was to move CME and GME to the new office located in the Cass #1 building.

Since initial administrative functions are completed and re-alignment of service lines has occurred, a few of the next steps designed to improving academic efficiency and quality include:

- Determine the true educational capacity for Children's-faculty and support staff will be asked to provide information and guide the shaping of an optimal mixture of learners in the Children's facilities
- Procure a comprehensive learner/student management system to assist all specialties with onboarding, learner scheduling/tracking, and reporting
- Promote new opportunities for indigenous faculty development and educational research
- Provide a focal point for all educational matters at Children's
- Review all educational financial and accreditation requirements—ensure compliance

Dr. Buzalko stated, “Our goal is to support and provide structure for all the learning opportunities at Children's Hospital and Medical Center which includes our outpatient clinics and outreach programs.” For many years, the clinical departments were required to provide their own support for education. The Office of Education's focus is to standardize education and provide optimal learning opportunities as the premiere dedicated pediatric care facility in the region. "Children's as a whole is growing...we hope that you can be a part of the growth of the Office of Education. Stop by and see us or schedule an appointment to chat about our future collaborations together," he concluded.

Meet the Children's Office of Education Team
Russell J. Buzalko, Ph.D., MAS, is the Director of the Office of Education and UNMC Adjunct Assistant Professor of Pediatrics. He has a combined 13 years of faculty experience in various higher education positions at UNMC, Clarkson College, Nebraska Wesleyan University, and the United States Air Force prior to becoming the founding director at Children's. With a doctorate in education, specializing in training and performance improvement, he hopes his twenty years in the military and academic background are the proper fit for the continued growth of the Office of Education and expansion of the academic mission at Children's.

Sara Olsen, M.Ed. has served as Continuing Medical Education (CME) Coordinator at Children's since 2010. Sara oversees a robust CME program which provides hundreds of hours of physician education activities annually. During her tenure and while teamed with Dr. James Harper, Director of CME, the program achieved consecutive 'Accreditation with Commendation,' the highest distinction offered for CME providers. Sara holds a master's degree in educational leadership & policy studies from Iowa State University and dual bachelor's degrees in broadcast news and sociology from Drake University. Prior to her role at Children's, Sara worked in student affairs at two Midwest universities.

Carrie Drummond recently celebrated her one-year work anniversary as the Children's Graduate Medical Education (GME) Coordinator as well as the Fellowship Coordinator for both Pediatric Surgery & Pediatric Anesthesia. She comes to us with an extensive background in the Department of Surgery at UNMC. She works frequently with many local GME coordinators and national agencies as the Children's point of contact for all GME matters. Carrie will be leaving the Office of Education on December 4th and we wish her all the best as she returns to UNMC.

Megan Sanchez, MHA, is the Children's Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) Coordinator. She has a background in data analytics and helped establish the Office of Education through the organization of student learner data--both UME and GME. She will continue to track and report on all learners coming through Children's. Her primary role is to work closely with university UME coordinators as they team together to onboard and support our medical students. She has also taken on the job of coordinating observer/shadows and academic internships.
Congratulations!

At the Association of American Medical Colleges meeting in November, Dr. Gary Beck Dallaghan was appointed interim chair of the Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) section of the Group on Educational Affairs (GEA). The purpose of the GEA is to advance medical education and medical educators through faculty development, curriculum development, educational research, and assessment in undergraduate, graduate, and continuing medical education. The UME section has as its mission to promote excellence in the education of medical students from selection to graduation and thereby contribute to the health of the public.

Dr. Beck Dallaghan was asked to complete the term by the current chair, who joined the staff of the AAMC in September. “I am excited to continue the great work my predecessors began by putting together resources other educators can use and not have to recreate the wheel,” he said.