

## **The Development of an Inter-professional Balance Screening Program for Seniors at Risk for Falls**

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### **Abstract**

Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and the most common cause of hospital admissions due to injury. However, current research shows that falls are preventable with early, strategic intervention. In response, Dr. Peggy Trueblood and the Gait, Balance and Mobility Research, Education, and Training Center formed an interdisciplinary coalition in June 2011 to fill a need identified in our community. One of the initiatives of that coalition was the development of an Inter-professional Balance Screening Program within the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) to identify seniors at risk for falls. Faculty and students from the Departments of School of Nursing, Physical Therapy, Kinesiology, and Public Health currently participate in this program.

The causes of imbalance and falls in our senior population are multi-factoral and a multidimensional approach to the assessment and treatment of balance-related problems that lead to falls has been shown to be best practice. The model we developed in our program allows for this multidimensional assessment. Students from each discipline contribute in their area of expertise, working together as a team to perform the necessary clinical assessments for each participant. Using this information, each team identifies the individual risk factors of a participant and makes individualized recommendations for a safe and healthy lifestyle. This program encourages students to put their clinical skills and knowledge learned in the classroom into practice with participants from the community.

Our Balance Screening Program offers an opportunity for collaboration between disciplines and students to use their respective educational background to gather information and problem-solve as a team, thus enhancing communication and critical thinking skills. In addition, this program provides a very valuable service to community members over 65 that may be at risk for falls. Each semester approximately 80 seniors and more than 100 undergraduate and graduate students from the CHHS participate in our Balance Screening Program.