The Department of Psychiatry is launching a new Cultural Competence course to help improve all aspects of working in and receiving care from the department. Collaboration and input from the University’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Faculty Diversity Officers, and Nursing Practice Diversity Task Force in consultation with the Continuing Medical Education Office led to creation of the course. A variety of faculty and staff in psychiatry and throughout the Medical Center contributed many valuable suggestions during the process.

Psychiatry’s Diversity and Cultural Competence Leadership Team (DCCLT) designed and built this Blackboard course to be readily available online to all department members. The course encourages faculty and staff to engage in a broad range of activities. Offerings include articles, lectures, Grand Rounds, and cultural immersion experiences as well as opportunities to provide service in the community. An Independent Study component that allows participants to submit ideas for review by the DCCLT for consideration as course content will help the course continue to grow.

Supervisors are encouraged to review portions of the course content in staff meetings to promote thoughtful dialogue and reflection within their work group. DCCLT members are available to assist with conducting conversations about the complex cultural differences and similarities that affect the mental health and well being of those in our care.

The expectation is that all department employees will participate in a minimum of three hours of cultural competence training each academic year. To ensure that accurate records are kept for participation in the program, it links directly to the Human Resources Management System (HRMS), where credit is accrued.

The department’s overall goal is to improve all aspects of working in and receiving care from the Department of Psychiatry. Additional goals include raising awareness and increasing knowledge about biases, stereotypes, and privileges that some enjoy while others do not. It is the department’s hope that behavior that inhibits the ability to interact genuinely can be influenced through participation in the course. Taking the history and perspectives of the community into consideration can enhance relationships and practices with coworkers and students as well as with those who pass through the Department of Psychiatry’s doors for care, education, or to participate in research.

For more information, contact Caroline Nestro, MS, RN, CS, associate director of the Office of Mental Health Promotion, Department of Psychiatry, (585) 275-6895 or at Caroline_Nestro@urmc.rochester.edu.