Five questions with....

Leigh W. Cellucci, PhD, MBA

Leigh W. Cellucci, PhD, MBA, joined the ECU faculty in January 2011 and is professor and program director in the Department of Health Services and Information Management. She was a Fulbright Scholar to India and recipient of a grant for innovative teaching from the American Sociological Association. She has published widely on topics related to healthcare management. The newest text (forthcoming) is co-written with her colleague, Dr. Elizabeth Forrestal, and focuses on professionalism and ethics for healthcare managers. While at ECU, she has received four grants sponsored by the BB&T Leadership Enhancement Fund that focus on leadership development in the classroom. In 2014, she received the CAHS Dean’s Award for outstanding performance in teaching and in 2015, she received one of the University Of North Carolina Board Of Governors’ Distinguished Professor Awards for Teaching. She currently serves on the board of directors for the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA) and as editor for the Journal of Case Studies, a publication of the Society for Case Research.

What do you like best about working at ECU?

My colleagues. I consider myself fortunate to be working with such smart, fun, and caring professionals. I partner with fellow faculty members on shared research interests, receive outstanding support by our educational technology specialists, and continue to learn via the workshops provided by the Office of Faculty Excellence team and university support for professional development.

What do you find most exciting about your research and its potential?

I enjoy the process of research and engaging in scholarship, the discovery of new information or knowledge regarding how managers may work to deliver healthcare better. Recently, my spouse who is a psychologist, two graduate students (MBA/healthcare concentration and psychology) and an undergraduate student (psychology) and I published a study that assessed EMR use in Psychology Training Clinics. While the clinics were adopting EMRs at a rate similar historically to physician practices, they primarily were focused on using the system functions as electronic paper records—for scheduling, documentation, communication between clinicians and supervisors, and billing as well as preforming clinic audits and reports. They were underutilizing decision support, practice reporting and patient support. This is an exciting time to assess EMR status in behavioral health settings because we can anticipate psychologists will experience what happened in physician practices—more extensive use of EMR functionalities related to meaningful use is associated with perceived improvement in quality and efficiency of care.

What excites you about teaching?

The students - both on campus and distance learners. In our undergraduate health services management program, I teach leadership in healthcare organizations to about 65 students annually. They will inevitably practice in an online environment, and a 2013 grant from the BB&T Leadership Enhancement Fund facilitated student involvement with social media for leadership development, emphasizing their planning, implementing, and evaluating interviews with current healthcare leaders located in North and South Carolina. Student assessment of the project was positive. Not only were they able to learn about leadership and professionalism directly from healthcare
leaders in various work environments, but the students also commented on the teambuilding experience they received. I enjoyed watching them develop confidence as they learned about the health services management profession and reaffirmed that this field is indeed where they belong.

What do you hope students take away from their experiences from working with you on your research?

The importance of asking questions, and the knowledge concerning how to go about answering them. I also hope they discover the process as intellectually rewarding and continue to engage in research efforts throughout their careers.

What is your favorite teaching or research moment?

In our graduate health informatics and information management program, I teach social and organizational issues in health information technologies, examining the impact of information systems on healthcare organizations through case research. I have found the students (many of whom are part-time students and currently working in healthcare) enjoy actual cases as they help them apply theory to complex, real world situations, draw connections across disciplines, and analyze data and draw conclusions in a particular business context. This spring, students in the course read an Ivey published case on the Obamacare Website and blogged about its launch from a project management perspective. Their posts not only exceeded my assignment expectations, but they taught me through their insights into what the Healthcare.gov website was trying to accomplish as they related case specifics to their experiences with information technology project management at their workplace. My favorite teaching moment is whenever I not only construct an assignment for students to learn, but when they return the favor.