



TABLE OF CONTENT

Section	Page
I. Executive Summary	i
II. Introduction	1
III. Student Response	
▪ Primary Campus Location	2
▪ Division	2
▪ Type of Organization	3
▪ Final Product	3
▪ Weekly Time Commitment	4
▪ Source for Locating Practicum	4
▪ Effectiveness of Learning Experience	5
▪ Student Satisfaction with Practicum	5
▪ Recommendation of Site	5
▪ Student Contact with Preceptors	6
▪ Preceptor Contact with Students	6
▪ Community Preceptor Attributes	7
▪ Student Satisfaction with Community Preceptors	7
▪ Faculty Sponsors Attributes	7
▪ Student Satisfaction with Faculty Sponsors	8
▪ Student Comments	8
IV. Community Preceptor Response	
▪ Perceptions of the Learning Experience	9
▪ Student Performance	10
▪ Community Preceptor Satisfaction with Students	10
▪ Community Preceptor Comments	10
V. Conclusions	10
VI. Acknowledgements	11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Rather than being a single discipline, public health includes professionals from many fields with the purpose of protecting the health of a population (Perlino, 2006).” This diversity provides a broad spectrum of professional possibilities for future public health practitioners. Through the practicum experience, schools of public health, and various public health agencies and organizations partner to provide training for students in a wide range of settings.

During the 2011-2012 academic year, 411 University of Texas School of Public Health students completed a practicum experience. This report provides an evaluation of the experience according to the students and the community preceptors and provides evidence that such experiences are viewed positively by both. Each semester the survey was sent to all students and community preceptors and was completed through the SurveyMonkey™ website. SPSS 19.0 was then used to analyze the results. The student survey consisted of 36 items pertaining to six components of their practicum, including demographics, practicum specific questions, effectiveness as a learning experience, preceptor evaluation, faculty sponsor evaluation, and satisfaction with the experience. Preceptor surveys included 20 questions through which they evaluated student performance, contributions, and the experience overall for the agency or organization. Response rates for students and community preceptors were 89% and 91%, respectively.

Students from all campuses and all divisions completed practicum experiences. Settings varied, with 28% of students working in a university/college system, 27% were placed in hospital/clinic settings, 17% were in governmental public health sites, and 28% of students experienced public health in other settings, such as businesses, community service organizations, foundations, and international organizations. Ninety-one percent of students indicated their practicum experience was very effective (66%) or effective (25%) as a learning experience.

Students indicated they were very satisfied with their community preceptors as 97% of students rated their community preceptors as very good (84%) or good (13%). Ninety-four percent either highly recommended (61%) or recommended (33%) their community preceptors. Mutual satisfaction was indicated by the community preceptors as 93% of students were rated as being very good (79%) or good (14%), and 83% of the final products produced by the students were rated as excellent (55%) or above average (28%) by the preceptors.

The time commitment by the students varied, but 82% of students reported spending 12 hours or more per week working on practicum-related activities. As an academic activity, students receive credit for participation in a practicum experience. Ninety percent of students registered for three or more credit hours for the semester.

The practicum experience allows students to put theory into practice and apply what they have learned in the classroom to a practical setting. Eight cross-cutting competencies are addressed through the practicum: (1) develop skills to work in teams, (2) navigate the work environment to accomplish objectives, (3) practice problem-solving skills, (4) work with diverse groups and cultures, (5) understand the structure of public health organizations, (6) formulate an idea from conception to completion, (7) develop an understanding of public health practice, and (8) develop leadership skills. Students and community preceptors indicated that the practicum experience provided an opportunity to develop in these areas as, on average, all eight were rated as 4 or higher on a 5 point scale by both students and community preceptors.

Students completing their practicum during the 2011-2012 academic year indicated that it was a positive and productive experience. Ninety-one percent highly recommend (46%) or recommend (45%) their site and 95% reported that the experience served as preparation for future employment opportunities.

Office of Public Health Practice

INTRODUCTION

A practicum is a planned, supervised, and evaluated “hands-on” experience that allows students to use the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom. The practicum is directly related to the academic goals and professional interests of the students. The practicum is population-based and addresses a need identified by the host organization. The practicum is an essential part of the curriculum and is a requirement of the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the accrediting body of Schools of Public Health.

During the 2011-2012 academic year, 411 students enrolled in a practicum. Students and community preceptors completed evaluations at the end of the semester. About two weeks before the end of the semester, SurveyMonkey™ formatted evaluation forms were sent to students and community preceptors via email. The student form had thirty-six items addressing five components of their experience: demographics, practicum objectives, community site, community preceptor, and faculty sponsor. The twenty-three item community preceptor form included information about the site and student performance.

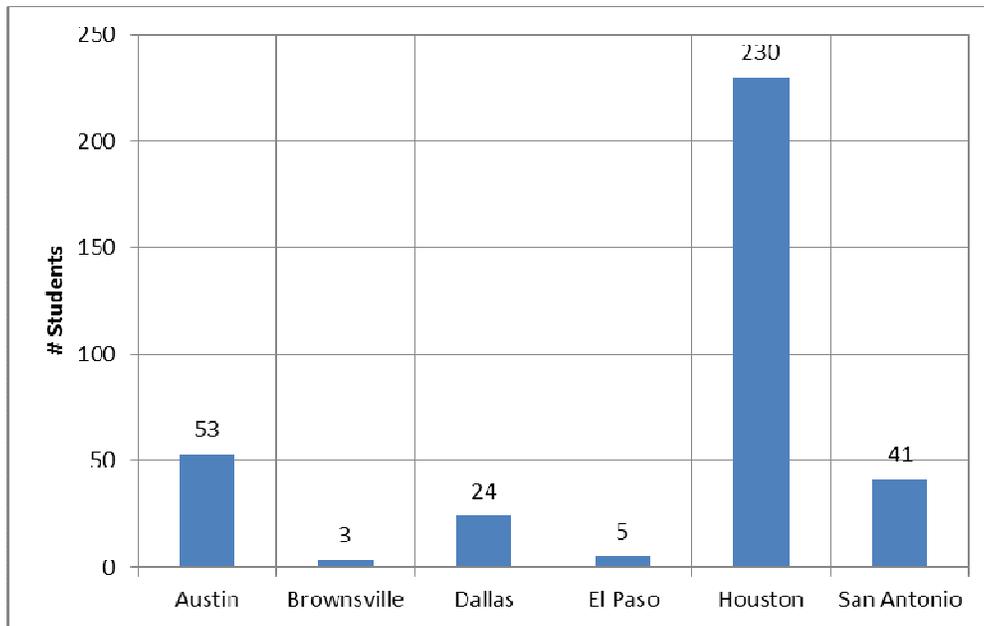
In an effort to increase response rates, students and preceptors were contacted three times after the electronic evaluations were distributed. The average annual response rates for students and community preceptors were 89% and 91% respectively. Student response rates per semester were: Fall 2011 – 91%; Spring 2012 – 84%; Summer 2012 – 92%. Community preceptor response rates per semester were as follows: Fall 2011 – 92%; Spring 2012 – 86%; Summer 2012 – 96%.

We used SPSS to complete the data analysis. Some respondents did not answer a few questions. Records were not removed because of a missing response for one or two items.

This report summarizes the experiences of students and community preceptors for AY 2011-2012 at the School of Public Health.

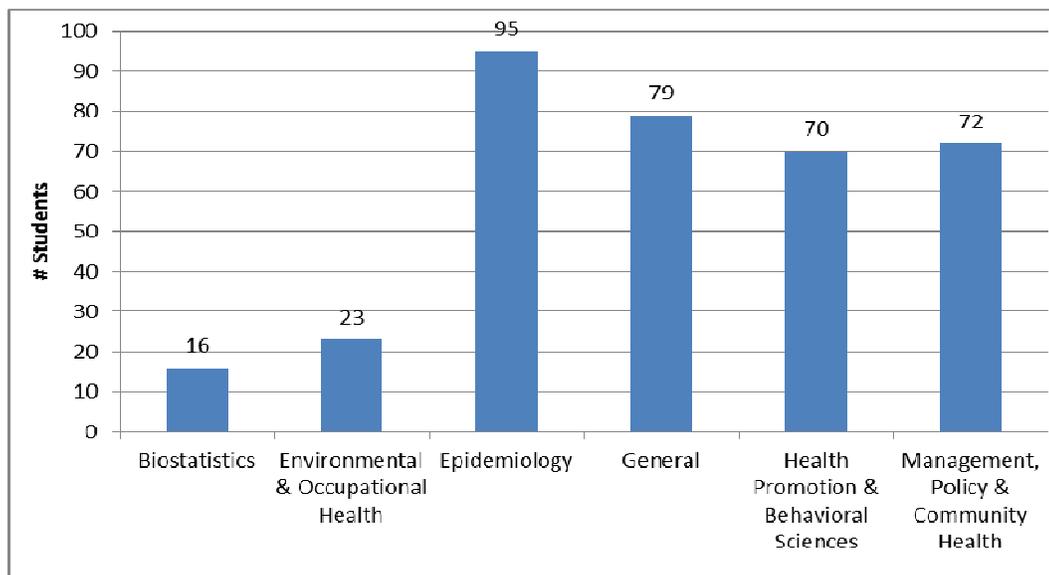
STUDENT RESPONSES

Primary Campus Location



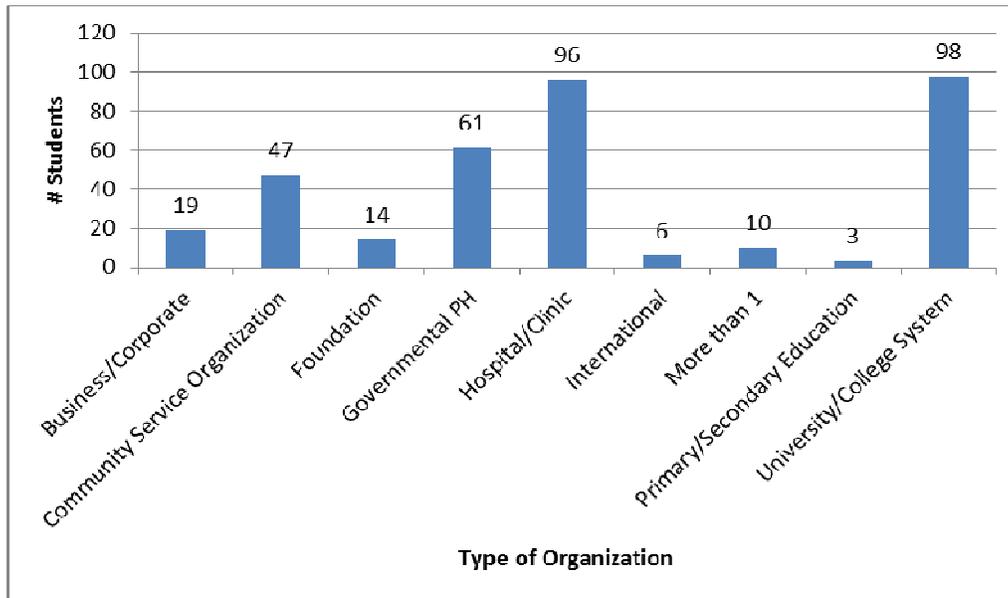
- 36% were from regional campuses

Division



- 27% Epidemiology and Disease Control
- 20% Management, Policy, and Community Health
- 23% General
- 19% Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences
- 6% Environmental and Occupational Health
- 5% Biostatistics

Type of Organization



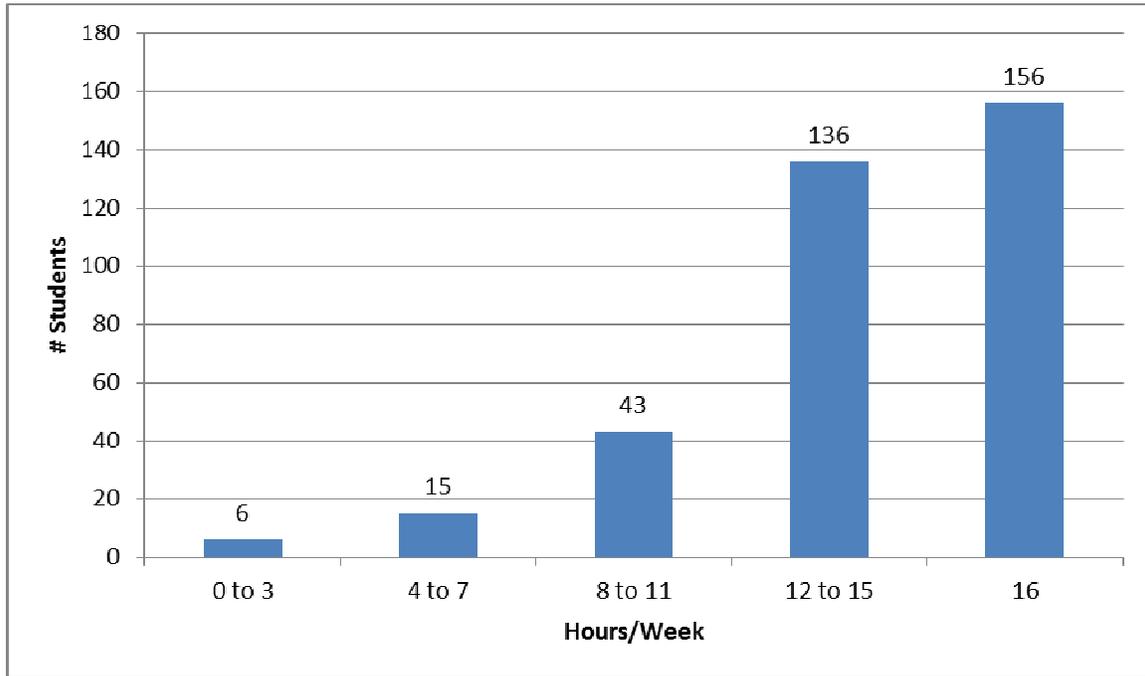
- 28% of student placements were in a university/college system
- 27% of students were placed at hospitals/clinics
- 17% of students interned in governmental public health(PH) sites
- 3% of host agencies were a combination of the above categories
- The remaining 25% of student practicum experiences were hosted by other types of organizations, such as businesses, community service organizations, foundations, and international organizations

Final Product

Report	34%
Combination (two or more final products)	34%
Presentation	12%
Instrument/Protocol	6%
Journal Articles	6%
Training Manual	7%
Thesis	1%

- 46% of students created a report or gave a presentation
- 34% of students completed more than one final product for their agency
- 83% of final products were rated as excellent (55%) or above average (28%) by the community preceptors

Weekly Time Commitment by Student (Hours/Week)



- 82% of all students spent 12 or more hours per week working at their practicum site
- 90% of students registered for 3 or more credit hours for their practicum

Source for Locating Practicum

Faculty	27%
OPHP Practicum website or emails	24%
Self-developed	6%
Current employment	13%
Friend/Colleague/Student	12%
Other	18%

- 39% of students identified their practicum opportunity with assistance from faculty (27%) friends, colleagues, or other students (12%)

Effectiveness of Learning Experience

Students rated the practicum experience according to how well they were able to meet the eight cross-cutting MPH competencies. Each was evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated very ineffective and 5 indicated very effective.

Question	Rating on a scale of 1 to 5 Average
Developing skills to work as a team member	4.59
Developing problem-solving skills	4.57
Understand the health goals of the community and organization	4.60
Developing an understanding of public health practice	4.49
Navigating work environment to accomplish objectives	4.54
Formulating an idea from conception to completion	4.52
Working with diverse groups and cultures	4.57
Developing leadership skills	4.39

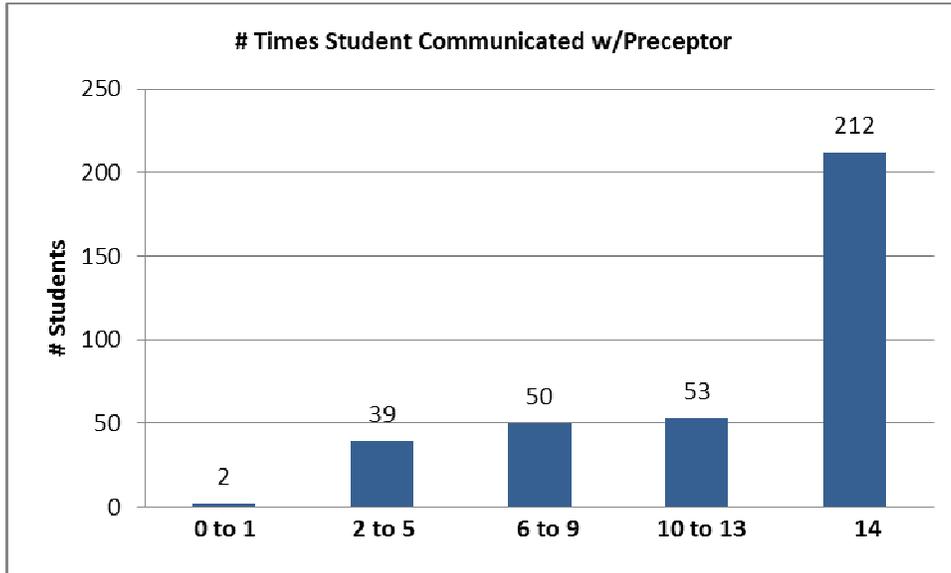
Student Satisfaction with Practicum

- 91% of students reported that the practicum was very effective (66%) or effective (25%) as a learning experience
- 95% of the students reported that their practicum experience served as preparation for job opportunities

Recommendation of Site

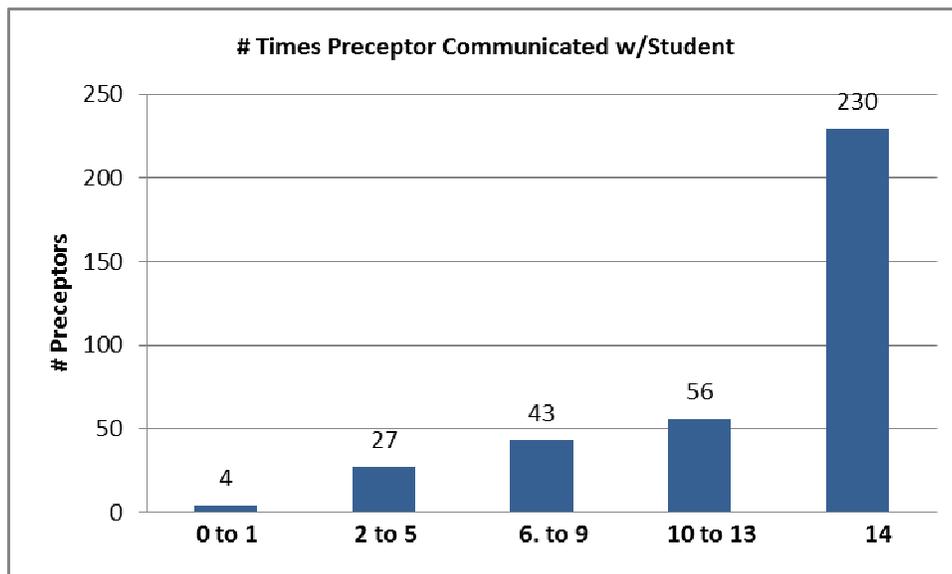
- 91% of students highly recommend (45%) or recommend (46%) their practicum site to other students

Student Communication with Preceptors during Practice Experience



- 74% of students met with their community preceptors 10 times or more
- Face-to-face communication was the most common form of contact
- 93% of students reported that the weekly time commitment was appropriate

Preceptor Communication with Students during Practice Experience



- 79% of community preceptors reported communicating with the student at least 10 times during the practicum placement

Community Preceptor Attributes

The table below illustrates how highly students regarded their preceptors. Students evaluated their preceptors in terms of their experience, flexibility, and mentorship. Ratings were made on a scale of 1 to 5 in which 1 indicated very poor and 5 indicated very good.

Question	Rating on a Scale of 1 to 5 Average
Experienced in his/her field of work	4.84
Flexible and open to making changes to suit my needs as a student	4.79
Willing to offer suggestions and directions when needed	4.75
Available to answer questions and provide support	4.76
Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work	4.69
Helpful in accomplishing project milestones	4.67

Student Satisfaction with Community Preceptors

- 96% of students rated their community preceptors as very good (84%) or good (13%)
- 94% of students indicated that they would highly recommend (61%) or recommend (33%) their community preceptor to another student for their practicum experience

Faculty Sponsor Attributes

Students rated their faculty sponsors highly in terms of their availability, flexibility, and ability to provide meaningful feedback to help meet their practicum goals.

Question	Rating on a Scale of 5.00 Average
Willing to offer suggestions when needed	4.46
Flexible to suit my needs as a student	4.45
Available to answer questions and provide support	4.42
Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work	4.40
Helpful in accomplishing project milestones	4.31

Student Satisfaction with Faculty Sponsors

- 88% of students gave their faculty sponsor an overall rating of very good (63%) or good (25%)
- 91% of students highly recommend (48%) or recommend (43%) their faculty sponsor to others

Student Comments (Random Selection)

- Provided solid guidance, support, and feedback throughout practicum experience.
- She was very helpful in connecting me with other members of the department to help in areas in which I was really needed.
- Very well organized. Provided great insight into the workings of government. Truly made me feel like a member of the team.
- Dr. Cormier fostered my learning and encouraged me to develop new skills and expand upon skills I already had.
- I think that my community preceptor was a great person to work with, and I learned a lot from her. Even though she was not at every one of the session that I had with the students, she was always involved in some way or the other. She took us to public health events regarding childhood obesity, which was relevant to the work that we were doing. She gave us the resources that we needed to make YAHL a great experience for the students that participated!
- My community preceptor was receptive to my needs as a student and was helpful to accommodate such needs to help me have a successful experience.
- Roger Perales has a lot of experience in the field of public health and therefore was a wonderful preceptor who was obviously passionate about his job and public health.
- Very helpful, knowledgeable, and willing to provide cultural activities while at the site location.

COMMUNITY PRECEPTOR RESPONSES

Perceived Effectiveness of the Learning Experience

Community preceptors indicated that they felt that the practicum experience allowed students to meet all eight cross-cutting competencies. They rated the

experience on a scale of 1 to 5 in which 1 was very ineffective and 5 was very effective.

Question	Rating on a Scale of 1 to 5 Average
Develop skills to work as a team	4.54
Navigate the work environment	4.63
Work with diverse groups and cultures	4.63
Problem solving skills	4.66
Formulate an idea from concept to completion of project	4.65
Understand the health goals of the community and organization	4.63
Develop an understanding of public health practice	4.40
Develop leadership skills	4.67

Student Performance

Student performance was highly regarded by community preceptors.

Question	Rating on a Scale of 1 to 5 Average
Ability and willingness to work with others	4.78
Ability to perform assigned task	4.75
Motivation, maturity, and initiative	4.67
Proficiency in using appropriate methods and techniques	4.71

Community Preceptors Satisfaction with Students

- 93% of community preceptors gave the students an overall rating of very good (79%) or good (14%)
- 96% of community preceptors are willing to host another practicum student

Community Preceptor Comments

- This student was exposed to most of the aspects of the Women With IMPACT program. Even though her focus area was evaluation, she assisted with recruitment, enrollment, child care, preparation of food and tangible reinforcement items, and she attended planning meetings and workshops. I believe her time with this program gave her a real-world experience in regards to health program planning, implementation, and evaluation. She did a great job and even though we hate to see her go, we know that she will do very well in the future!
- This student was my second MPH intern and I am currently working with my third. So grateful for your students' expertise and passionate contributions to our work.
- Student has understood a new and evolving subject in a fairly short period of time and has put in a lot of effort in obtaining over 400 meaningful journal articles to be used in a study.
- Student is very timely in completing necessary tasks. He also understood the importance of his work and generated a report to show investigators interesting trends with important implications for our project protocols.
- Student is very hard working and is an excellent team player.
- This student is a great example of a model UT student!
- This student was an excellent addition to our team - we were glad to have her! In fact, we have now hired her as a part-time research assistant.
- I must reiterate that this student impacted our organization in ways that will translate to better coping skills for our families who accept the task of working with children who present with many challenges. She brought invaluable skills to our organization and we are grateful.

CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation demonstrates the win-win nature of applying classroom learning to the “real world.” Students overwhelmingly reported that the practice experience helped them develop problem-solving skills and become more familiar with public health practice. Community preceptors were highly impressed with the students’ skills, motivation, maturity, and initiative. Overall, 94% of the community preceptors reported that they would be willing to accept students for future practice experiences; and 94% of the students believed their practice experience was complimentary in preparing them for the job market.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the University of Texas School of Public Health, the Office of Public Health Practice extends our warmest gratitude to the organizations and community preceptors who graciously allowed our students to gain practice experience at their places of business. Without your continued support and feedback, we would not be able to offer this invaluable experience to our students.