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 2006-2007 academic year, 12 students from Dallas Regional Campus completed a practicum evaluation. Students and community preceptors completed evaluations at the end of the semester. About two weeks before the end of the semester, Survey Monkey™ formatted evaluation forms were sent to students and community preceptors via email. The average annual response rates for students and community preceptors were 94% and 76% respectively.

In an effort to increase response rates, students and preceptors were contacted three times after the electronic evaluations were distributed.

STUDENT RESPONSES

Primary Campus Location
El Paso (n = 12)

Division
• 100% General

Type of Organization
• 42% University/College System
• 33% Hospital/Clinic
• 17% Government
• 8% Foundation

Sites
• Centro San Vicente
• Texas A&M-Texas Agricultural Experiment Station
• Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
• African Inland Church-Kapsowar
• Texas House of Representatives
• American Pain Foundation
University of Texas at El Paso
El Paso Community College
Texas Tech University
Universidad de Costa Rica

**Practicum Topics**
- Develop an evaluation
- Work with *Cryptosporidium parvum*
- Develop manual of procedures for research on *H.pylori* eradication
- Develop procedures to select study sample using cluster sampling
- Understand, learn, and participate in health care in Kenya
- Participate in development of public health policy at state level
- Improve biostatistic skills
- Measure children’s respiratory health and asthma
- Educate middle school students on health literacy
- Monitor and manage adverse events in ongoing clinical research
- Assess primary health care delivery method of Costa Rica

**Final Product**
- 55% Report
- 18% Training/Procedure Manual
- 9% Instrument/Protocol
- 9% Presentation
- 9% Promotional Materials

**Weekly Time Commitment by Student (Hours/Week)**
- 45% students enrolled at the El Paso Regional Campus spent 12 hours or more working on practicum related activities
- 64% students enrolled at the El Paso Regional Campus counted their practicum experience for 3 credit hours or more

**Source for Locating Practicum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Employer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend/Colleague</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Developed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*One Missing Case

**Effectiveness of Learning Experience**
As indicated in the table below, students reported that their practicum provided an effective learning experience across eight competencies
### Student Satisfaction with Practicum
- 91% of students reported that the practicum experience was effective, with 45% indicating that the practicum was very effective
- 73% of students reported that their practicum prepared them for job opportunities

### Recommendation of Site
- All students reported that they would recommend their community site, with 27% reporting that they would highly recommend their community site

### Student Contact with Preceptors during Practice Experience
- 45% of students met with their community preceptor 10 times or more
- Face-to-face was the most common form of communication
- 82% of students reported that the weekly commitment was appropriate

### Community Preceptor Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating on a Scale of 5.00 Average</th>
<th>SPH Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced in his/her field of work</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible and open to making changes to suit my needs as a student</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to offer suggestions and directions when needed</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available to answer questions and provide support</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Student Satisfaction with Community Preceptors
- All community preceptors were rated as above average, with 45% rated as very good.

### Faculty Sponsor Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating on a Scale of 5.00 Average</th>
<th>SPH Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible to suit my needs as a student</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>4.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to offer suggestions when needed</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful in accomplishing project milestones</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Student Satisfaction with Faculty Sponsors
- All faculty sponsors were rated as above average, with 64% rated as very good.

### 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, 95% of the community preceptors reported that they would be willing to accept students for future practice experiences; and 91% of the students believed their practice experience was complimentary in preparing them for the job market.