

Office of Public Health Practice

Epidemiology

Student Practicum Evaluations

AY 2005-06

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 2005-2006 academic year, 36 epidemiology students 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. Students and preceptors were contacted three times after the electronic evaluations were distributed. The average annual response rates for students and community preceptors were 82% and 76% respectively.

STUDENT RESPONSES

Division

Epidemiology (n = 36)

Primary Campus Location

- 86% Houston
- 8% San Antonio
- 6% Dallas

Type of Organization

- 50% Hospital
- 31% University/ College
- 16.5% Government
- 2.5% Foundation

Sites*

- Baylor College of Medicine – Cell and Gene Therapy
- Baylor College of Medicine - Medicine-Cardiology
- Baylor College of Medicine – Misc.
- City of Houston Health Department
- Houston Dept of Health & Human Services - Epidemiology

- Infection Prevention & Management Associates
- MD Anderson Cancer Center – Misc.
- MD Anderson Cancer Center – Cardiology
- MD Anderson Cancer Center - Center for Research on Minority Health
- MD Anderson Cancer Center – Health Disparities Research
- MD Anderson Cancer Center – Interventional Radiology
- Ryan White Planning Council
- San Antonio Metro Health District - Public Health Preparedness
- St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital - Infectious Disease
- Texas Children's Hospital
- University of Texas
- University of Texas Health Science Center
- University of Texas Research Center
- UT Medical School - Cardiothoracic Vascular Surgery
- UT Research Center - Center for Infectious Diseases
- UTH Medical School - Division of Pediatric Nephrology and Hypertension
- UTH Medical School - Urology
- UTHSC - Human Genetics Center
- UTHSC - School of Nursing
- UTHSC Dental School
- WellStar Health System - Disease Management/Performance Improvement

*Spring and Summer Semesters Only**

Practicum Topics

- An Innovative Telephone Intervention for HIV-Positive Smokers
- Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities
- BMT Data Analysis
- Cardiomyopathy
- Clostridium Difficile Associated Diarrhea
- Coding and Data Analysis of Nurses' Intentions to Respond to a Bioterrorism Event
- Comparative Evaluation of Human vs. Bovine Hemostatic Agent Clinical Trial
- Consumer Survey Administration and Analysis
- DASH Study and Positive Choices
- Dental Survey
- Enhanced Contrast Soft Tissue Study – DYNA CT
- Epidemiologic Factors Influencing Incidence and Prognosis in Mexican Women Versus Mexican-Americans with Breast Cancer
- Facilitation of Prevention Program
- Field Epidemiology
- General Surveillance
- Heart Failure Research

- HIV Prevention among Drug Users
- Impact of Dietary Intervention in Men with Prostate Cancer
- Infection Control Practitioner
- Pediatric Advanced Life Support Guidelines
- Performance Improvement
- Pericardiocentesis
- Prostate and Renal Cancers
- Questionnaire Design on Pediatric Hypertension Guidelines
- Smoking Cessation Clinical Trial
- South Texas Border Health Care
- Studying the Effect of Altered Redox State on Various Parameters of Cardiomyocytes and on Cardiac Physiology
- Syndromic Surveillance
- TB Elimination Program

*Spring and Summer Semesters Only**

Final Product

- 42% Report
- 37% Other
- 12% Journal Article
- 6% Presentation
- 3% Thesis

Weekly Time Commitment by Student (Hours/Week)*

- All students reported that they spent 16 hours or more working on practicum related activities per week
- 93% of the epidemiology students counted their practicum experience for 3 credit hours or more

*Spring and Summer Semesters Only**

Source for Locating Practicum*

Faculty	9
Friend/Colleague/Student	7
Self-developed	4
Current employment	4
Email	7
OPHP Practicum website	3
Other	1

*One Missing**

Effectiveness of Learning Experience

As indicated in the table below, students reported that their practicum provided an effective learning experience across eight competencies

Question	Rating on a scale of 5.00 Average	SPH Average
Developing skills to work as a team member	4.71	4.64
Navigating work environment to accomplish objectives	4.54	4.53
Developing problem-solving skills	4.65	4.49
Working with diverse groups and cultures	4.48	4.43
Understanding the structure of the community organization	4.53	4.38
Formulating an idea from conception to completion	4.51	4.38
Developing an understanding of public health practice	4.46	4.37
Developing leadership skills	4.56	4.32

Student Satisfaction with Practicum

- 92% of students reported that the practicum experience was effective, with 62% reporting that their experience was very effective
- All students reported that their practicum prepared them for job opportunities

Recommendation of Site

- 97% of the students reported that they would recommend their community site, with 36% reporting that they would highly recommend their site

Student Contact with Preceptors during Practice Experience

- Face-to-face and email were the most common forms of communication
- 97% of the epidemiology students reported that the weekly commitment was appropriate

Community Preceptor Attributes

Question	Rating on a Scale of 5.00 Average	SPH Average
Experienced in his/her field of work	4.89	4.86
Flexible and open to making changes to suit my needs as a student	4.69	4.76
Willing to offer suggestions and directions when needed	4.72	4.73
Available to answer questions and provide support	4.67	4.72
Helpful in accomplishing project milestones	4.61	4.64
Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work	4.72	4.61

Student Satisfaction with Community Preceptors

- 97% of community preceptors were rated as above average with 47% rated as very good

Faculty Sponsor Attributes

Question	Rating on a Scale of 5.00 Average	SPH Average
Flexible to suit my needs as a student	4.47	4.63
Willing to offer suggestions when needed	4.58	4.60
Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work	4.47	4.46
Helpful in accomplishing project milestones	4.39	4.45

Student Satisfaction with Faculty Sponsors

- All faculty sponsors were rated as above average with 56% 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, 97% of the community preceptors reported that they would be willing to accept students for future practice experiences; and 97% of the students believed their practice experience was complimentary in preparing them for the job market.