

**University of Texas School of Public Health  
Practicum Evaluation  
Executive Summary – Fall 2010**

**Introduction**

Eighty-five students from all four degree programs completed a practicum experience during the Fall 2010 semester. Students and community preceptors were asked to complete an evaluation through Survey Monkey™. Student and preceptor response rates were 86% and 91%, respectively. The key findings are listed below.

**Primary Campus and Division**

- 71% Houston, 29% regional campuses
- 29% Management, Policy & Community Health; 27% Epidemiology; 18% General program; 11% Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences; 7% Biostatistics; 7% Environmental & Occupational Health Sciences

**Students**

- Locations: University/college system (34%), hospital/clinic (23%), business/corporate (8%), community service organizations (11%), health departments (5%), government (6%), international (3%), federal (3%), primary/secondary education (3%), foundation (3%)
- 88% of students thought the practicum was very effective (53%) or effective (34%) as a learning experience
- Final products: report (41%), more than one product (14%), journal article (12%), instrument/protocol (8%), training/procedure manual (8%), presentation (10%), promotional material (4%) or thesis (1%),
- The practicum was very effective (52%) or effective (44%) in giving students a better understanding of public health practice
- 81% of students registered for 3 credit hours or more
- Student hours per week: 16 or more (40%), 12-15 hours (36%); 95% considered the weekly hours to be appropriate
- 59% of students reported contact with their preceptor 14 or more times
- Overall ratings of preceptors were positive: 78% very good and 18% good
- 93% of students highly recommend (52%) or recommend (41%) their community preceptors
- 96% of students highly recommend (47%) or recommend (49%) their faculty sponsor
- 92% of students highly recommend (36%) or recommend (56%) their practicum site

**Community Preceptors**

- 74% of preceptors rated their student's final product as excellent (44%) or above average (30%); 9% had an incomplete mainly because the final product was a publication
- 90% reported that student proficiency in using appropriate methods was very effective (56%) or effective (34%)
- Preceptors rated overall student performance as very good (65%) or good (23%)
- 69% of preceptors reported meeting with the student 10 times or more
- 87% of preceptors found the student's weekly time commitment was appropriate

- 90% of preceptors are willing to accept another student

### **Student Comments**

- I learned all I set out to learn, and even more, at the practicum site. My preceptor (and the lab team) was readily available and actively facilitated my learning.
- This practicum served as an excellent opportunity to expand my leadership abilities. Although this was very focused for my experience, I recommend that students get involved in a pilot project and small grants for their practicum.
- This is a place where I have been working since a long time and have realized the various strengths of our study design that is primarily based on the noble cause of identifying markers in the early stage breast cancer patients. The site has many knowledgeable and skilled mentors, professors, fellows and research assistants that help you to understand the aim of your project along with guiding one through the various problems that he/she might face in channeling the thought process and applying the skills that one has gained in the public health studies.
- Not only did I work closely with my preceptor, I also had the chance to collaborate with other people in the field of public health which was a valuable experience.
- My community site allowed me to sharpen my leadership and problem solving skills. My suggestions were respectfully heard and carefully considered. This encouraged me to freely speak my mind about solutions to project challenges.

### **My community preceptor was...**

- My Community Preceptor was excellent at her work. ... very experienced, dynamic, dedicated and hard working. She provided me with experience and garnished my public health skills during my practicum. ... very supportive and flexible to any changes to meet my needs as a student.
- Community Preceptor was a wonderful. I designed my own project and he assisted in any way he could. He was always available via face to face or email.
- Really nice and encouraging. I worked under another team member within the office, but my community preceptor was always available if I had any concerns or questions.
- My community preceptor was my go to guy. He continually challenged me to give my all on all the projects I was assigned to. And when I was assigned tasks that took me out of my comfort zone, he was there to encourage me with suggestions to tackle such tasks.

### **Community Preceptor Comments**

- All the UTSPH students that have worked under my preceptorship have shown great commitment to public health, and are willing to learn about new methods and techniques in the field.
- Student did such an outstanding job with us this Fall that we have extended an offer for her to remain part-time in our division. Definitely a first class individual.
- Student has been a valued member of our team.

### **Acknowledgements**

On behalf of the University of Texas Health Science Center 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. Without your continued support and feedback, we would not be able to offer this invaluable experience to our students.