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, 31 health promotion and behavioral science 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 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

Division
Health Promotion/Behavioral Science (n = 31)

Type of Organization
- 52% University/College
- 19% Government
- 16% Hospital/Clinic
- 10% Community Service Organization
- 3% International

Sites
- University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
- Texas Children’s Hospital
- Baylor College of Medicine
- University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
- Houston Police Department
- Infection Prevention & Management Associates
- Houston-Galveston Area Council
• Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains
• Hispanic Health Research Center
• Harris County Hospital District
• The Fountain of Praise
• Harris County Hospital District
• Universities in Southern Vietnam
• Ajou University Medical Center
• University of Texas at Austin
• March of Dimes
• University of Houston
• Houston Ryan White Planning Council (Harris County)

Practicum Topics
• Logic model for program evaluation planning
• Development of computer-based behavioral change interventions, Escape from Diab and Nanoswarm
• Women’s Healthy Eating and Living Study
• Disaster Preparedness Development for Houston Police Officers
• Factors of one’s risk of contracting HIV
• Infection control practitioner in a hospital environment
• Government Involvement in Environmental Planning
• Student Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) and System for Observing Fitness Instruction Time (SOFIT) in elementary schools
• Partners in Dementia
• HIV/AIDS in the Houston area
• Weight management interventions for children
• Curriculum Delivery of HIV, STD, and Pregnancy Prevention Programs
• Weight loss strategy within Harris County Hospital District (HCHD)
• Comparing Cachoeira to Brazil data on maternal and child health indicators
• Nutrition and Immune System Function
• Gender Power and Self-efficacy
• Community based rehabilitation (CBR) program in South Korea
• Chronic disease prevention and control
• Develop and conduct evaluation of anti-retroviral therapy program in Haiti
• Health literacy survey among patients in Harris County Hospital District
• March of Dimes Texas Chapter Comenzando bien program
• Create Newer Tests to Study and Verify Synesthesia
• Results of Emergency Trauma Care and Response in a 13 County Region
• Develop exit questionnaire to solicit information on experiences of members of a research and distribute entire cohort in a summary report
• Survey administration and research methodology
Final Product
- 65% Report
- 19% Presentation
- 6% Instrument/ Protocol
- 6% Training/ Procedural Manual
- 3% Journal Article

Weekly Time Commitment by Student (Hours/Week)
- 74% of health promotion/ behavioral science students spent 12 hours or more working on practicum related activities
- 83% of students counted their practicum experience for 3 credit hours or more

Source for Locating Practicum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-developed</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend/Colleague/Student</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Public Health Practice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current employment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<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>Developing skills to work as a team member</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigating work environment to accomplish objectives</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing problem-solving skills</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with diverse groups and cultures</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the health goals of the organization</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulating an idea from conception to completion</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing an understanding of public health practice</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing leadership skills</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>4.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Satisfaction with Practicum
• All students reported that the practicum experience was effective, with 65% reporting that the experience was very effective
• 97% of students reported that their practicum prepared them for job opportunities

Recommendation of Site
• 94% of students reported that they would recommend their community site, with 45% reporting that they would highly recommend their community site

Student Contact with Preceptors during Practice Experience
• 74% of health promotion students reported that they met with their community preceptor 10 times or more
• Face-to-face and email were the most common forms of communication
• All health promotion 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>4.84</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible and open to making changes to suit my needs as a student</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to offer suggestions and directions when needed</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available to answer questions and provide support</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful in accomplishing project milestones</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Satisfaction with Community Preceptors
• 94% of community preceptors were rated as average or above, with 77% 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>4.48</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to offer suggestions when needed</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful in accomplishing project milestones</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Satisfaction with Faculty Sponsors
- All faculty sponsors were rated as average or above, with 68% 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.