

Office of Public Health Practice
Management, Policy, and Community Health Science
Student Practicum Evaluations
AY 2006-07

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, 35 management, policy, and community 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

Management, Policy, and Community Health Science (n = 35)

Type of Organization

- 40% University/ College
- 20% Hospital/ Clinic
- 14% Business/Corporate
- 14% Government
- 9% Community Service Organization
- 3% International

Sites

- University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
- University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
- University of Houston
- The Methodist Hospital
- Texas House of Representatives
- Baylor College of Medicine

- Samaritan's Purse International Relief
- Dynamic Health Strategies
- Memorial Hermann Hospital
- City of Houston Health Department
- Houston Department of Health and Human Services
- Veterans Affairs Medical Center
- Texas Children Health Plan
- St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities
- Children at Risk
- Harris County Medical Examiner
- The Kidney Institute
- Muhimbili University College of Health Sciences
- St. Luke's Episcopal Health System

Practicum Topics

- Perception of environmental carcinogen exposure in Fresno, Texas
- Familiarity with literature and aspects of survey, data collection and analysis
- Health Seeking Behavior among Uninsured and Illegal Immigrants
- General observation of Methodist Hospital's Business Practices Program
- Gain experience at the state level
- Understand limitations of subjective self-reporting
- Relationships of clinical medicine to core public health objectives
- Cost-effectiveness study project
- Magnolia Community Assessment Intervention and Mobilization (A.I.M.)
- Analyze foodborne disease using Turnock's 10 essential services
- Background orthotopic liver transplantation
- Develop measures of identifying risk parameters among trauma patients
- Understanding issue/barriers pertaining to CHIP Medicaid in Harris County
- Ovarian cancer
- Training in Hepatology
- Conduct focus groups to evaluate Project Safety Net's user friendliness
- Current legislative and regulatory issues affecting the University of Texas Health Science Center-Houston
- Identify biological correlates of cognitive decline in patients with diabetes
- Cost of treating gallbladder patients in Ben Taub Hospital
- White Paper on Children's Health Insurance Program in Texas
- Compiling drug related death demographic data in Harris County
- Project management of epidemiological studies
- Economic evaluation perspectives
- Non-Governmental Organizations and University of Texas to implement HIV prevention programs for intravenous drug users
- Promoting Colon Cancer Screening in people 50 and Over

- Help Manage Development of Advanced Disaster Life Support training program
- Community Assessment
- Intersection between public health and foundation philanthropy work

Final Product

- 71% Report
- 11% Journal Article
- 6% Instrument/Protocol
- 6% Presentation
- 3% Thesis
- 3% Training Manual

Weekly Time Commitment by Student (Hours/Week)

- 83% of all health management, policy, and community health science students spent 12 hours or more working on practicum related activities
- 77% of all health management, policy, and community health science students counted their practicum experience for 3 credit hours or more

Source for Locating Practicum

Faculty	12
Friend/Colleague/Student	8
Self-developed	7
Current employment	4
Office of Public Health Practice	3
Others	1

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	4.57	4.46
Navigating work environment to accomplish objectives	4.54	4.46
Developing problem-solving skills	4.60	4.50
Working with diverse groups and cultures	4.38	4.40
Understanding the structure of the community organization	4.44	4.41
Formulating an idea from conception to completion	4.62	4.48
Developing an understanding of public health practice	4.40	4.37
Developing leadership skills	4.39	4.32

Student Satisfaction with Practicum

- All students reported that the practicum experience was effective, with 74% indicating that the practicum was very effective
- 91% of students reported that their practicum prepared them for job opportunities

Recommendation of Site

- 97% of students reported that they would recommend their community site, with 51% reporting that they would highly recommend their community site to other students

Student Contact with Preceptors during Practice Experience

- 66% of students met with their community preceptor 10 times or more
- Face-to-face was the most common form of communication
- 97% of 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	4.91	4.78
Flexible and open to making changes to suit my needs as a student	4.60	4.69
Willing to offer suggestions and directions when needed	4.77	4.56
Available to answer questions and provide support	4.74	4.66
Helpful in accomplishing project milestones	4.57	4.49
Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work	4.54	4.53

Student Satisfaction with Community Preceptors

- All community preceptors were rated as average or above, with 86% 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	4.60	4.49
Willing to offer suggestions when needed	4.51	4.52
Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work	4.49	4.39
Helpful in accomplishing project milestones	4.49	4.32

Student Satisfaction with Faculty Sponsors

- All faculty sponsors were rated as average or above, with 71% 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.