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, 32 health promotion/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 82% and 76% respectively.

STUDENT RESPONSES

Division
Health Promotion/Behavioral Science (n=32)

Primary Campus Location
- 91% Houston
- 6% Dallas
- 3% Brownsville

Type of Organization
- 44% University/College
- 22% Hospital
- 16% Government
- 12% Community Organizations
- 3% HMO
- 3% Foundation

Sites*
- University of Texas at Dallas - Criminology Department
- Center for Health Promotion & Prevention Research
- CHPPR
Baylor College of Medicine - Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Research Center
Health Disparities
Harris County Psychiatry Center - Research and Program Evaluation Studies
Health Communication, Research & Networking
Community Prevention and Intervention Unit
Center for Health Promotion, It's Your Game...Keep It Real Program
UT- Houston, Medical School
Texas Tech University
UT School of Public Health
Baylor College of Medicine
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects
Texas Birth Defects Epidemiology & Surveillance Branch
Houston Police Department
Birth Defects and Epidemiology Surveillance Branch
Texas Department of State Health Services
M.D. Anderson Cancer Center
Downtown Family YMCA
Area Health Education Center
Pink Ribbons

Spring and Summer Semesters Only*

Practicum Topics *
Rape and Victimization in the Prison System
It's Your Game, Keep It Real! Project - Facilitator
Delivering Curriculum for an HIV, STD, and Pregnancy Prevention Program
Breast Cancer
Smoking Relapse Prevention Among Postpartum Women
Transporting Treatment for Homeless Cocaine Abusers
Health Communication - Public Awareness of Health Education Campaign
HIV Prevention
Psychosocial Aspects of Unknown Primary Cancer
Traumatic Brain Injury in Prison Population
Facilitate HIV/STD/Pregnancy Prevention Program for Middle School Youth
Sexually Transmitted Diseases Among Incarcerated Youth in Southeast Texas
Childhood Obesity Community Outreach Research
Behavioral Research for the Prevention of HIV among Substance Abusers
Emergency Center Utilization Patterns
Developing a Further Understanding of Ethics as it Applies to Human Subjects
Diabetes, Folic Acid and Birth Defects
Bioterrorism / Natural Disaster Preparedness
• Birth Defects
• Prevalence of Diabetes in MD Anderson
• Health Policy
• Health Disparities Research
• Establishing a UT-YMCA referral network
• Bi-National Health Week - Planning and Organization
• Breast Health Promotion and Marketing of Community Fundraisers

Spring and Summer Semesters Only

**Final Product**
• 41% Report
• 25% Other
• 19% Thesis
• 6% Journal Article
• 6% Training Manual
• 3% Presentation

**Weekly Time Commitment by Student (Hours/Week)**
• 81% of health promotion/behavioral science students spent 16 hours or more working on practicum related activities
• 88% of health promotion/behavioral science students counted their practicum experience for 3 credit hours or more

Spring and Summer Semesters Only

**Source for Locating Practicum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend/Colleague/Student</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-developed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current employment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPHP Practicum website</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</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</th>
<th>SPH Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing skills to work as a team member</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigating work environment to accomplish objectives</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing problem-solving skills</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with diverse groups and cultures</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the structure of the community organization</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulating an idea from conception to completion</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing an understanding of public health practice</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing leadership skills</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Satisfaction with Practicum
- All students reported that the practicum experience was effective
- All students reported that their practicum prepared them for job opportunities

Recommendation of Site
- All students reported that they would recommend their community site with 50% reporting that they would highly recommend their community site

Student Contact with Preceptors during Practice Experience
- 81% of health promotion students reported that they met with their community preceptor 16 times or more
- Face-to-face and email were the most common forms of communication
- 97% of 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>4.87</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible and open to making changes to suit my needs as a student</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to offer suggestions and directions when needed</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available to answer questions and provide support</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful in accomplishing project milestones</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Satisfaction with Community Preceptors**
- All community preceptors were rated as above average with 65% 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>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to offer suggestions when needed</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful in accomplishing project milestones</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Satisfaction with Faculty Sponsors**
- All faculty sponsors were rated as above average with 51% 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.