

## **FIELD STUDIES SEARCH AND SELECTION**

### **IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL PLACEMENTS**

1. Department solicitation of community resources: In January, the Department sends letters to our network of organizations throughout Southern California informing them of our new cadre of students. Many of these organizations respond to this solicitation by developing projects and requesting students.
2. Student Development. Students may develop a field experience on their own using their own professional networks and contacts. Students who choose to develop their own field experience must submit information on the site, a description of the anticipated project, and a resume or other documentation of the preceptor's qualifications. (All student-initiated field experiences are subject to approval by Dr. Prelip.)
3. Professional Community Request. Organizations often seek student assistance to complete special projects. These opportunities are evaluated for their appropriateness as field experiences. Many organizations are simply looking for part-time student employees. This type of work experience is not appropriate for Field Studies assignments, which must meet certain criteria designed to maximize the professional development of our students. (See next section.)

### **WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE PLACEMENT?**

Each student and assignment is individual. Each relationship between the student and preceptor is unique. Students and projects vary. One student may have a major project within one department of the organization while another student may have several smaller projects from a variety of organizational sub-units. Some placements are predetermined and require the student to fit into the specified conditions. Other placements are flexible and built around the students' specific skills and interests.

Regardless of the nature of the placement, the student's work should be valued by the organization and make a contribution towards the organization's goals and mission. Finally, the work should be flexible enough that the student can be exposed to a variety of meetings and decision-making processes at all levels of the organization.

## **EXAMPLES OF RECENT PROJECTS**

Evaluation of Domestic Violence Shelter Nurse Project  
Study of Barriers to Folic Acid Use Among Low-Income Pregnant Women  
Technical Assistance of the Health Rescue Immunization Project  
Teen Violence Prevention Project in the Mid San Fernando Valley  
Hepatitis B and C Education for the Homeless  
Community Health Assessment of Riverside County  
Empowering the south Asian Community in Los Angeles  
Emergency Preparedness Training for Underserved Elementary School Children  
Study of High-Risk Behaviors and Service Utilization of Transgender Youth

## **PRECEPTOR AND SITE SELECTION**

1. Preceptor Competence and Experience: The demonstrated or potential excellence of the preceptor is a significant variable in the success of your field experience. Preceptors, as teachers, are extension of the program faculty. They are carefully evaluated before being accepted as appropriate to teach our students. The Department seeks preceptors who are open, interested, and available, and who possess an educational philosophy and experience that are compatible with the Program. Successful preceptors will have an inclination and ability to direct an individualized learning experience.
2. Student Interest and Career Objectives. The Department seeks sites that are consonant with the interests and career objectives of students in terms of type and scope of services provided, location, area of focus in community health sciences and level of task challenge.
3. Institutional Support. Factors include: ability and willingness to pay the customary stipend; a supportive organizational structure, particularly the management team; opportunities for students to be exposed to a variety of organizational departments, individuals, tasks and functions. Students shall have access to any data required to conduct their projects.

## **FIELD STUDIES SITE SELECTION PROCEDURE**

Finding an appropriate field site will require some expenditure of effort on your part. Every student brings a different set of interests and experience to the table. Likewise, every field opportunity offers a different set of tasks, skills and knowledge. A successful field experience is usually the result from an optimum fit between a student's interests and skills and the requirements of the site. While the final selection of the field site is a matter of agreement between the student and the site, the department will facilitate the process of finding a field

site. To assist us in this facilitating role, you are required to complete several documents that will help you to focus your interests and identify the most appropriate field experience. These forms are available on the web.

Field Studies Planning Form. The planning form is designed to assist you in identifying your strengths as well as those areas you would like to develop further. The form focuses on those areas of community health sciences that have historically been of interest to our students. This form will give you an opportunity to define your interests, talents and skills so that a better fit can be made between you and a site. **No student will be referred to a site for placement or informational interview without a Field Studies Planning Form on file.**

Resume. All students must update their resumes in preparation for field placement interviews. **No student will be referred to a site for a placement or informational interview without a current resume on file.**

Field Studies Orientation. Early each Winter quarter, Dr. Prelip holds two mandatory orientation sessions. Attendance at one of these sessions is mandatory for all first year CHS students. During the session, Dr. Prelip will present an overview of the process for identifying and selecting a field site. In addition, he will explain the field studies' requirements in detail and answer your general questions.

Individual Student Meetings with the Field Studies Supervisor. All students will meet with Dr. Prelip during February or March to review their strategy for securing field studies. At this meeting, Dr. Prelip will have the opportunity to meet each student and learn about your individual background and skills. With this information, he can provide more effective assistance. During these meetings, he can also help with resume preparation and answer questions unique to each student. For students who are not sure what type of field experience they are looking for, these individual meetings can provide information about different areas of community health sciences and help to narrow the focus of the search. Some students may be directed to contact practitioners in the community for informational interviews. The Department maintains a cadre of very supportive practitioners who take the time to talk with our students. Many students have found these informational interviews very helpful in focusing their search.

Informational Interviews. During the Winter and Spring quarters, many students go on informational interviews. Students can make appointments with alumni as well as current and previous preceptors who enjoy meeting with students and helping them as they begin their careers. For many students, this is the first time they will begin negotiating the professional field of community health sciences. From now on, it is important that you think and behave as a professional. This will also be the beginning of professional networking for many of you.

“Networking” is a fundamental skill in your professional toolkit. The world of community health sciences is small indeed. You will most likely meet many of your new contacts many times throughout your career.

Field Studies Binders. The Department maintains several large binders containing abstracts of students’ previous field studies. In addition, the Department maintains a small binder of the existing open internships each year. The binders are available in the Department office (CHS 36-071) for your review.

Final Selection. Students generally interview with several potential sites, and sites often interview several candidates. This provides both the student and the preceptor with an opportunity to assess the appropriateness of the fit and the learning opportunities. The eventual match of the student and the site represents a joint decision between both parties and must be approved by Dr. Prelip.