

Final Summary Report

HST 4275-Health Studies Internship

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Eastern Illinois University

Health Education Resource Center

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&

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Table Of Contents

Structure and Function of Agency	3
Description of Experiences and Activities . .	5
Perceptions and Judgments about the Internship .	8

Structure and Function of Agency

The Health Education Resource Center is a division of Health Services. Health Services is maintained by Dr. Sheila Baker, the Medical Director of Health Services, and Lynette Drake, the Director of Health Services. Most of the health education responsibilities (as well as some other miscellaneous responsibilities) are deferred to Eric Davidson who is the Associate Director of the Health Service. Also managing the HERC is Ryan Messinger, who is the Health Education Coordinator. They are responsible for supplying relevant health education programming to the students on Eastern Illinois University's campus.

Those two then manage all of the Graduate Assistants working in several positions within the HERC. There is a GA for each area: marketing and promotion, financial health, alcohol and tobacco, greek health, sexual health, nutrition and assessment and research. These graduate assistants are responsible for developing or modifying programs to get their specific information to reach college students. They also organize activities, meet with students on an individual basis, and help out other individuals at the HERC when they can.

Then working with the GA's and both Ryan and Eric, are the interns. Some interns are designated to a specific GA, and some have multiple responsibilities. As an intern I had the pleasure of working in three areas of health education: sexual health, tobacco, and designing a sleep campaign. This position can include many different tasks and responsibilities from day to day. These range from designing whole programs to giving presentations on specific topic material to a select group of students to providing information to students who walk in looking for help in a certain area.

There is also a group of student employees that assist the HERC in its day-to-day functioning. These individuals are given the title of student associates and they provide most of the secretarial and office work throughout the HERC. Their responsibilities include: posting materials around campus, answering the HERC phone and transferring calls (mostly to the health clinic), making copies, helping out at HERC sponsored events, and generally completing any task given to them by Ryan. They also have the opportunity take on special jobs such as organizing the Health Fair, or working on Kick Butts Day. These students also are usually the first to greet individuals who walk into the HERC, and they help to make the general processes of the day run smoothly.

Descriptions of Experiences and Activities

As previously stated I was responsible for a few things within each topic of sexual health, tobacco prevention, and sleep programming. In any given day I would probably work on something from each one of these areas.

Within sexual health I was given the responsibility of doing “Rubber Lover” presentations. After first researching relevant material and compiling a multitude of articles for a possible sexual health newsletter, I studied the existing Rubber Lovers PowerPoint. With help from Catherine, the sexual health graduate assistant, I practiced and gave one Rubber Lover presentation to a group of about 20 people in a business fraternity. Later on in the semester I gave a Women’s Health presentation, when Catharine was unable to meet the time constraints of the resident assistant that had requested the program. I also was given the opportunity to give another Rubber Lover program to a music fraternity. In addition to giving the programs I entered in all the personal data for new members into the tracking sheet. I also updated this sheet every week or so as people came in to pick up their free packet of condoms associated with the program. I also was added to the list serve mailing list and was able to send out a few mass emails with interesting facts to existing Rubber Lovers members.

In addition to this I worked on an event called “Kick Butts Day” which was a 5K walk/run and community picnic created to support tobacco prevention efforts in the community of Charleston held on April 4th, 2009. I worked in collaboration with Erica Roa, the tobacco and alcohol prevention graduate assistant, Rachel Fisher, the Student Community Service Director, and Jenna Manigold, a student associate. The four of us each had different tasks to handle in order to pull the day together. One of my duties was to contact local community organizations

and businesses to request their support of tobacco prevention as well as an informational or activity table at the event. My other major assignment was to find local bands that would be willing to play for free on the day of the event, to provide live entertainment for the all-ages crowd. The event itself was a success and surpassed Erica and Rachel's expectations from the event that they had originally begun the year before. On that day a majority of the HERC staff pulled together and worked as a team to run the event.

The final and most expansive portion of my internship involves the creation of a sleep campaign to be implemented in the fall of 2009 to Carman Hall here on EIU's campus. I worked with fellow interns Anna Kair, Ginny Hanover, and Kaylin Humerickhouse (who was a professional writing intern), to develop the bulk of the actual program as well as the materials vital to its success. The program materials as a whole are two-thirds complete, and will be finished by the interns that come in the summer, with some guidance from our group before we depart. On the last day of the internship we will all go before representatives from Health Services, Housing and Dining, the Counseling Center, and the Student Recreation Center as part of our master presentation for Carman Hall and the Wellness Coalition (who have also taken an interest in our program). We will present the materials and the outline of the program as it currently stands, and will answer any questions our audience may have for us. Most of the materials and ideas that we have created have been a collaborative effort and are a reflection of our collective thoughts, but there were a few things I completed individually. I created most of the posters that will be displayed throughout Carman Hall, as well as the postcards that will be distributed to students through their mailboxes. I also created the first theatrical representation involving the campaign's mascot Sleep Sheep, which will be turned into a podcast over the

summer. I've spent a lot of time with the sleep campaign and look forward to its implementation next fall.

In addition to the day to day projects, the Health Fair was a separate but important venture. I helped to create both the sleep booth and the sexual health booth to be presented on the day of the Health Fair. On the actual day, I was in the Student Recreation Center for 8 hours helping out wherever needed and running both the sexual health and sleep booths as needed.

My daily schedule can then be pulled from the listing of activities in the paragraphs above. As mentioned before, most days I worked on something from each of the areas I was responsible for. The day usually began with e-mailing contacts about Kick Butts Day, or filling in information from the previous evenings Rubber Lover presentation. Then if the other sleep interns happened to come in we would go over concepts and work on any one of the unique materials to be used in the program. On Wednesdays this included a meeting with Eric who was the head of the sleep project. He would direct us as to where to go from the point we were at and then give suggestions about work we had completed. Or, if it was a Thursday, I would meet with the Kick Butts Day crew to discuss progress and issues during the development of the event. Usually then I would take a break for lunch. When I returned I would do more e-mailing if there were responses that needed attention, and I would research relevant subject material. I may at this point have worked on a specific sleep product such as a poster or a theatrical representation, or reviewed the Rubber Lover or Women's health PowerPoint. And throughout the day I would greet students or staff as they walked in and try to help them with whatever they need, be it a Rubber Lover packet or an appointment. But no day was exactly the same as the next, so this is only a rough picture of what it may have looked like.

Perceptions and Judgments about the Internship

I would definitely consider this internship to be a learning experience. I feel that this semester I have grown more than in my entire college career, not only as a health studies major but as a person. I feel like my experiences here have let me open myself up to the world and the broader spectrum of things. Some of the problems that I encountered along the way probably helped to contribute to this realization.

One of the most consistent problems that I had was trying to adapt to the technology available. Not only is Citrix (the online database of programs) confusing to use, it often would be down for long periods of time. So not only did I have difficulty making documents in foreign programs such as InDesign, I had trouble saving them and often had to redo them because they were lost completely. This taught me a great deal of patience. In time I learned to work the program and realized that there is always a way to do something, no matter how complicated it may be. I also learned to ask lots of questions.

The other problem that stands out the most to me and perhaps the one I learned the most from was communicating with people outside of the university. Before coming to the HERC one of my biggest personal problems was being able to communicate well. But, needing to contact all sorts of individuals from the Charleston community and other surrounding communities gave me the will to overcome that. Unfortunately, it was often hard to get a hold of the right people and harder to get a reasonable response from them. In the end things worked out well, I learned how to take polite letdowns and was satisfied with the turnout of only one community exhibitor (out of eight contacted) at Kick Butts Day. But, I was even more displeased with the reliability of the live bands that I was contacting. They seemed to be flighty and I ended up losing two of the three

that I had scheduled just two days before the event was to take place. Again, it was frustrating, but the one band that cooperated was amazing and I learned that it was well worth the effort put forth.

Actually I think that's the most valuable thing I learned here at the HERC, that the effort you put in is always worth it in the end, no matter the outcome. I feel like this is an important point to stress in Health Education, because things rarely turn out exactly the way you expect them to. I remember back to my interview with Ryan and Eric when I asked them if they were satisfied with the number of people that attend the events that the HERC puts on, and they both agreed that it never seems to be as many as they would hope. Which on the positive side leaves room for improvement, and improvement can be very rewarding.

I feel that the Health Studies program prepared me well for this internship. This may be because I feel as if it followed everything we've done in class. I consider it a sort of a real-world application for what I've studied. I hadn't expected that, but I was pleasantly surprised. I think one of the things that helped the most were assessment methods, and things I learned in Program Planning. I also think that the education I received in the Microcomputers class helped, because this was the first time I legitimately had to use Microsoft Publisher to produce documents, and had I not had that class I would have been completely lost. The classes that stressed controversy in the health field, and political correctness really helped me see things that may have been controversial more objectively than I may have. And I also have to thank Epidemiology for the ability to translate all the commotion about the Swine Flu, which has become an increasingly large concern at the HERC.

There weren't many areas that I didn't feel prepared for. Perhaps the models of theories could have been stressed a little more. I know there were a few times this semester when I was reading a document or talking to Eric when I realized that I probably should look up the specific model for reference. Mostly, I think the theories all start to sound alike and it's difficult to make the distinction between them at a moment's notice. This was really the only area that stood out to me as far as needing more information on.

I feel that my internship experience was wonderful, and I would highly recommend this to any student who is interested in the promotion and education aspect of health studies. I have found the atmosphere to be lively and lighthearted but also conducive to learning and a great place to learn from mistakes. I feel that there is a great deal of opportunity to work with specific topics that a student might be interested in, and that the staff there will work with them to tailor the internship to their interests. This is something I don't see too many workplaces offering. I hope that many more health studies students take the opportunity to intern at the HERC, and that they enjoy it as much as I have!