OVERVIEW

Thank you for your interest in hosting an intern from the Public Health Science Program at the University of Maryland, College Park. The internship is offered for students as a way to integrate their coursework in the theory and science of public health with real world experience, increase their understanding of public health-related organizations, and develop professional skills though on-the-job training. Internships may vary significantly in time spent and responsibilities. That is, students may work from 3-22 hours per week for credit, with responsibilities ranging from small data management and/or writing tasks to larger community outreach efforts and advocacy work. Expectations are negotiated in advance with the student and host organization to be suitable to both parties. Internships receiving Public Health Science credit are attached to a graded course. Many of our students plan to apply to medical school or other professional schools, enter into allied health careers, or continue with advanced degrees in public health. Real-world work experience through internships can help them fine-tune their goals and offers invaluable practice in applying new skills.

What are some examples of the work PHSC interns do?

- Perform community outreach and health screenings
- Conduct community needs assessments
- Collect and analyze survey data
- Develop sites and create health content for social media
- Present on program evaluation results
- Contribute to grant proposals
- Write program reports
- Plan and implement health fairs and related events
- Develop culturally appropriate health communication materials
- Participate in policy analyses and health advocacy efforts

What are the dates of the internship?

- Internships for Spring run from late January to mid-May
- Summer internships run from late May to mid-August
- Internships for Fall run from late August to mid-December

How much time does a student spend in an internship?

The internship counts as a 1-6 credit course, and students are required to work 3-22 hours per week, depending on the credits applied. Most will be taking other courses in addition to the internship.
What type of courses have students completed? All Public Health Science students seeking internships have generally completed courses in:

- General Biology
- General Chemistry
- Microbiology
- Anatomy & Physiology
- A foundational social/behavioral science course
- Public Health Biology
- Environmental Health
- History of Public Health

Some have also completed courses in:

- Epidemiology
- Biostatistics
- Health Policy
- Health Informatics
- Health Communication
- Emergency Preparedness
- Program Planning & Evaluation
- Global Health
- Behavioral and Community Issues in Public Health

Are there specific competencies required for internships? Internships must be consistent with one or more of the following Public Health Science Program competencies:

- Discuss the history and philosophy of public health as well as its core values, concepts, and functions across the globe and in society.
- Use basic public health concepts, methods, and tools for data collection and analysis.
- Identify the major health-related needs and concerns of populations and formulate basic processes, approaches, and interventions as possible solutions.
- Describe the underlying science of human health and disease including opportunities for promoting and protecting health across the lifespan.
- Examine the socio-economic, behavioral, biological, environmental, and other factors that impact human health and contribute to health disparities.
- Demonstrate the fundamental concepts and features of project implementation, including planning, assessment, and evaluation.
- Compare and contrast the fundamental characteristics and organizational structures of the health systems of the United States and other countries.
- Characterize the basic concepts of legal, ethical, economic, and regulatory dimensions of health care and public policy.
- Illustrate the basic concepts of public health-specific writing and communication.
- Interpret and synthesize scientific knowledge to propose evidence-based approaches and solutions to public health problems.
What are my responsibilities?

The primary responsibilities of a host agency/internship supervisor are:

- Provide meaningful work that promotes the professional growth of the intern while pursuing the goals of your organization. The work may be in-person or remote. Safeguards consistent with CDC guidelines for in-person work must be followed.
- Designate a qualified site supervisor/preceptor for the intern who is available to meet with the intern at least once per week. This may be a remote meeting. Typically, this person has an MPH or at least 5 years of experience in public health.
- Provide an orientation and training for the intern, similar in quality to that provided to new employees. This includes orienting the student to the background, structure, regulations, and operations of the organization.
- Give your intern regular work hours and sign off on his or her hours worked. (The student will need to complete and submit to UMD monthly time sheets and have these signed by a supervisor. Signatures may be electronic, or separate emails may be sent to the Internship Coordinator to confirm hours.)
- Work with the student to develop goals and objectives, and a clear set of responsibilities. This will form the basis of a contract signed by both parties and will be one of the items used to assess the student’s final grade.
- Offer a range of opportunities for learning (such as staff meetings, conferences, community events, public hearings), whenever possible.
- Assign routine clerical tasks only to the extent that the intern derives some learning experience from them.
- Provide the intern with adequate work space and supplies. If the work is remote, specify for students the technology tools expected for a home office (internet access, laptop, cell phone service, printer, other). Will the student be compensated for expenses related to remote work? Are there considerations regarding data privacy and security?
- Make other staff available to the intern to answer questions and provide support when needed.
- Alert Nancy Smith, Internship Coordinator, of any problems or concerns.
- Prepare two evaluations of the intern, a mid-term and final, and offer corresponding feedback to the intern. Evaluation forms will be provided by email.
- Additional tips and considerations for remote work management are provided at the end of this document.

What will I gain from the experience?

The benefits to hosting an intern include:

- Gaining valuable assistance in pursuing organization goals from interested and enthusiastic students with current training in public health.
- Obtaining fresh perspectives, insights, and ideas on a variety of projects and tasks.
- Providing an opportunity for your organization and the University of Maryland to collaborate.
- Contributing to the further development of public health professionals.
What is the next step?
Your intern will be requesting to meet with you to complete the Internship Contract. Please be as specific as possible when describing the intern’s duties. Keep a copy of this contract for your records and give a copy to the intern. You can use this when preparing his/her evaluations.

Questions about the internship program should be directed to:
Nancy Gray Smith, PhD
Internship Coordinator
Public Health Science Program
School of Public Health
University of Maryland
4200 Valley Drive, Rm 2314
College Park, MD  20742
301-405-9146
phscintern@umd.edu

Thank you kindly for your consideration!

Tips for Remote Work Management:

1. **Information at Time of Hire**: To help facilitate a successful internship, it is important to specify for students the technology tools expected for a home office (internet access, laptop, cell phone service, printer, other). Will the student be compensated for expense related to remote work? Are there considerations regarding data privacy and security?

2. **Learning Objectives**: Discuss, determine, and agree on three or more learning outcomes with the student intern that they can expect to learn as a result of the internship.

3. **Orientation**: Plan an orientation that is effective for both interns and supervisors. Provide an overview of your organizational mission, values, and structure. Consider setting up one-on-one meetings with staff members the intern will interact with most.

   Be sure everyone involved is clear on expectations, including: work hours, specific internship responsibilities, and organizational policies. Be clear on what will constitute a successful internship.

4. **Intern Handbook or Website**: Whether in paper booklet format, or presented as a special section on your website, a handbook serves as a guide for students, answering frequently asked questions and communicating the “rules” in a quickly accessible way.

5. **Intern Manager**: Having a dedicated manager for your intern program is the best way to ensure that it runs smoothly and stays focused on your criteria for success. This also gives the interns a “go-to” person. For this to work well, it is important to plan the program structure in advance, and not expect the intern to do it. Supervisors should have expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience (i.e., public health or related field).
6. **Virtual Weekly Meetings:** Weekly meetings with interns are considered best practice with video chat and screen sharing for personalized feedback. This meeting is a time for project planning, review of progress made, feedback, and mentoring. It is important to provide candid and helpful feedback with suggested improvements and how to best make those improvements. Consider a regular agenda for these meetings that also includes a student report on hours worked, challenges or problems encountered, progress toward assignments, progress toward learning objectives, other feedback on the experience, and any questions they may have.

7. **Shared Communication Tools:** Use online document-sharing tools to allow instant updates and easier communication between the student and supervisor. Consider use of a company intranet or virtual workspace on a server, or an online project management or document-sharing tool, such as Google Docs. This will allow the supervisor to go online and monitor the work which is to be completed. The work is stored in the "cloud," not on a single PC, so it is always available to those who need it.

8. **Project-Based Assignments:** Interns should be doing work related to their major, that is challenging, that is recognized by the organization as valuable, and that fills the entire work term. Larger project-based assignments rather than a series of small unrelated tasks, are most conducive to a sense of meaningful work.

9. **Team Involvement:** The organization should make the virtual interns a part of regular operations as much as possible by, for example, including them in team, management, and client meetings, as appropriate.

10. **Professional Networking Opportunities:** One of the greatest advantages to students in having internships is the access they have to accomplished professionals in their field. Speakers from the top ranks are popular with students—it is a great career development and role modeling experience for interns.

11. **Offering Trainings and Referrals to Outside Classes:** Providing students with access to in-house training—both in work-skills-related areas, such as a computer program (like Excel), and in general skills areas, such as time management—is appreciated by students as part of the professional development process. Referring students to free, relevant outside workshops, certification programs, and courses online (such as MOOCs) is another valued approach, especially if some internship hours can be used for this training.

12. **Assessment:**
   - **Intern Feedback:** Checking in regularly with the interns on their experiences can provide valuable feedback on the internship experience, (what works, and what is challenging) so you can consider adjustments. Conducting exit interviews, focus groups or surveys can be helpful in collecting this input for future interns too.
   - **Supervisor Feedback:** Performance evaluations are common in workplace settings and can provide valuable formal feedback for students on areas of professionalism such as work ethic, attitude, professional strengths, and areas that could use improvement. Performance evaluations mid-term and at the end of an internship are particularly helpful where students have time to demonstrate improvement.

13. **Showcasing Intern Work Through Presentations, Posters, Expos:** Students work very hard at completing their work and are generally proud of their accomplishments. Setting up a venue for them to present their projects (formal presentations or in a fair-type setting such as an expo) not only allows them to demonstrate their achievements, but also showcases the internship program to a larger audience. This can be done in a virtual space.