GUIDE TO FIELD STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

The Mission of the Program in Health Policy and Management is to advance the health of populations through improving the effectiveness and efficiency of health services in private and public health organizations. The Program seeks to improve organizations through the career development activities of graduates, sponsored research, and community services. The educational aspect of this mission is expressed in the goal of the program - to prepare managers, policy analysts and leaders through professional education with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to manage health organizations effectively in a socially responsible manner and to help establish health services policy that reflects social efficiency, equity and justice.

The Health Policy and Management Field Studies course provides a fundamental contribution to the achievement of this mission and goal. The field studies course combines practice in the field with written and oral exercises based on the summer field experience. Students focus on the application of academic learning in the work setting by preparing a written analysis of an organizational or policy problem identified during the summer.

All students registered in the Master of Public Health Program in Health Policy and Management are required to complete a 400-hour internship in an appropriate health care setting and to write an analytical report focused on an organizational or policy issue or decision identified during the internship placement. Health care settings may include hospitals, managed care organizations, medical groups, government agencies or departments, consulting firms, community organizations, advocacy programs, or other related health settings.

This Field Studies Guide provides important information that will help you to plan internship search and summer internship activities.
OBJECTIVES
The internship process consists of two components: the internship or field study and the written consulting report. Each component has its own objectives.

The Objectives of the Field Studies Experience are to:
- Experience management and policy analysis in a practice setting;
- Apply the theory, knowledge, skills and techniques obtained in the classroom to a professional setting;
- Understand organizational dynamics in a given practice setting;
- Polish and enhance management and policy analysis skills under the guidance of an experienced preceptor;
- Develop a professional persona by integrating the lessons of a professional environment;
- Provide an opportunity to explore a particular health care setting as it might relate to future career decisions.

The Objectives of the Written Report are to:
- Integrate theoretical principles and professional practice by analyzing a problem and proposing a solution;
- Develop professional writing skills by preparing a field studies related report organized and presented as a consulting report;
- Develop presentation skills;
- Share lessons learned with classmates and preceptors;
- Develop professional skills;
- Complete a requirement for the Masters of Public Health Degree.

THE FIELD STUDY PROCESS
The field study process is comprised of three parts:
1. The internship search and selection process,
2. The summer field work experience, and
3. The written deliverables.

Upon completion of HLT POL 400, the student will receive a grade. The summer field experience is not graded. However, it can impact your final grade through the selection of the project at your site and the thoroughness with which you carry it out. Therefore, it is important to think seriously about the project as you plan your internship.
TYPICAL FIELD STUDY TIMELINE
The following timeline outlines the major elements of the internship process. This timeline is approximate and will vary for each student.

January
Attend mandatory informational and kick-off meeting

February
Complete Summer Internship Planning Form; meet with Program Director to review Planning Form, resume and student’s personal expectations

March
Preceptor Recognition and Student Networking Event

March-April
Identify potential placement sites; continue meeting with Program Director

March-May
Informational and placement interviews

May-June
Continue placement interviews; negotiate and finalize field placements; complete and return Internship Data Sheet

June
Attend Boot Camp

Mid June-Early July
Begin summer internship

2nd week of Internship
Submit signed Contract and Scope of Work

August 15
Submit Proposal for Consulting Report

September
Internship Ends

Fall Quarter
Enroll in HLT POLM 400; write report and prepare presentation

January
Final Consulting Reports mailed out to preceptors
PART 1: INTERNSHIP SEARCH AND SELECTION

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL PLACEMENTS

1. Department Solicitation of Community Resources. Each year, the Department sends emails 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 an intern.

2. Student Development. Students may develop their own internships using their network of contacts. Students who choose to develop their own internships must submit information on the site, a description of the anticipated project, and a resume or other documentation of the preceptor’s qualifications. The internship must be approved by the Program Director prior to the commencement of the internship. The Program Director will contact the potential preceptor to discuss the expectations of the Department of Health Policy and Management Field Studies Program.

3. Professional Community Request. Projects often arise in organizations that seek student assistance in their completion. These opportunities are evaluated for their appropriateness as internships. Many organizations are simply looking for part-time student employees. This type of work experience is not appropriate for Field Studies assignments, which are specifically designed and precepted learning experiences for the student.

WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE PLACEMENT?

Each student and assignment is individual. Each relationship between the student and the preceptor is unique. Flexibility is important. 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 students’ work should be valued by the organization and make a contribution to meeting the organization’s goals and mission. As such, the Program expects that the student will be paid for his or her work as a professional. Finally, the work should be flexible enough that the student can be exposed to a variety of meetings and decision-making process at all levels of the organization. Because students are required to develop a written consulting report, the nature of the projects and assignments on which the student works is important in selecting an internship site.
EXAMPLES OF RECENT PROJECTS

- Process examination of transitions of care;
- Clinical reminders for nurses and physicians treating cancer;
- Staffing strategy for teleradiology;
- Examination of federal financing options for long-term services and supports;
- Reducing the number of patients lost to follow-up in a care management program;
- Scaling up access to Hepatitis C treatment and services in LA County jails;
- Developing policy and program recommendations for childhood obesity prevention;
- Deployment strategy for integrated video visits;
- Preliminary feasibility study for a diabetes management center at an urban medical center;
- Implementation plan for advance care planning;
- Assessing the viability of an inpatient neurological rehabilitation unit;
- Patient flow analysis of same day surgery unit;
- Needs assessment of under-served populations for maternal and child health care services;
- Improving emergency department throughput;
- Supporting safety net providers to build capacity for quality improvement;
- Strategic plan for hospital technology assessment and acquisition;
- Improving urgent care in a medical group;
- Tracking health outcomes for a medical-legal partnership;
- Developing a dashboard to improve payment timeliness in a health plan;
- Developing a medical home pilot project for a county medical center;
- Recommendations for California’s successor DSRIP.

PRECEPTOR AND SITE SELECTION

1. **Preceptor Competences and Experience.** The demonstrated or potential excellence of the preceptor is a significant variable in the selection of an internship site. Preceptors, as teachers, are extensions of the program faculty. They are carefully evaluated before being accepted as appropriate to teach our students. The Program seeks preceptors who are open, interested, and available and 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 Program seeks sites consonant with the interests and career objectives of students in terms of type and scope of services provided, location, area of focus in health policy and management, 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.
INTERNSHIP SITE SELECTION PROCEDURE
Finding an appropriate internship will require some expenditure of effort. Every student brings a different set of interests and experience. Likewise, every internship opportunity offers a different set of tasks, skills, and knowledge. Finding the best fit between a student's interests and skills and the requirements of the site will achieve a successful internship. While the final decision of internship site is a matter of agreement between the student and the site, the department facilitates the process of finding an internship. To assist us in this facilitating role, you are required to complete several documents that will help you identify the most appropriate internship and keep you focused on the search. You may download these forms on our Health Policy and Management CCLE website (https://ccle.ucla.edu/). Please Keep a Copy for Reference!

Summer Internship Planning Survey
The planning survey is designed to assist you in identifying your strengths and those areas that you would like to develop further. It attempts to identify those areas in the field of health services that have historically been of interest to our students. This form will give you an opportunity to express yourself about your interests, talents, and skills so that a better fit can be made between you and a site.

Resume
All students must update their resumes in preparation for field placement interviews.

Individual Student Meetings with the Program Director
All students will meet with the Program Director during January and February to review their resume and Internship Planning Form. For students who are not sure of the particular area of the health system in which they want to practice, these one-on-one meetings can provide information about different areas of health services delivery and health policy. 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 narrowing their internship search.

Informational Interviews
During the fall and winter quarters, many students go on informational interviews. Students can make appointments with Program 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 many students will begin negotiating the professional field of Health Policy and Management. From now on, 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 health policy and management is small indeed. You will most likely meet many of your new contacts many times throughout your career.

Final Selection
Students interview with several potential internship sites. Sites may interview several students. This provides both the student and the preceptor 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 the student and the site with the approval of the Program Director.

**Internship Data Sheet**
The Internship Data Sheet is to be completed as soon as a placement is finalized. The Data Sheet is the registration form for field studies and must be on file in order to receive credit for the internship.

**INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING**

**Purpose**  
To obtain firsthand information that will assist you in choosing a career.  
Remember, it is **NOT** a job interview. It **IS** a networking and information gathering session.

**Procedure**

1. **Contacts:** Identify and choose individuals working in a career area that interests you. Use referrals to develop your own contacts/network.
   Speak to people in different settings to get a good overview of the field.

2. **Approaches:** Personal referral, phone call, email.

3. **Preparation:** As much as possible. Research the career, company, competition, mark, etc. prior to the interview.

4. **The Interview:** Dress and behave in a professional manner.
   - Establish rapport with the person you are interviewing and indicate interest in their career.
   - Share something about your interests and skills.
   - Be sure to request names of other people you can contact.

5. **Follow-up:** Record information about the interview for your records: name, organization, address, telephone number, summary notes.
   Send a thank you note!

**Informational Interviewing Q&A**

Perhaps the best way to expand your knowledge about a particular area of work is to talk to people doing that work; in other words, Informational Interviewing. The aim is to learn what a "typical day" is like, how they prepared for their occupations and what skills they feel someone entering the field must possess.

The person you interview for information probably knows several people working in the same field at other organizations. He/she may be willing to refer you to these people for additional informational interviews. In the future, if he/she hears of a position that could use your skills, you may be remembered from the informational interview and be referred to the position.
What is the difference between Informational Interviewing and simply asking employers for jobs?
Informational Interviewing allows you to gather data about an occupation and/or industry. The data may, in the future, enable you to demonstrate to potential employers how your unique combination of skills, interests, and values can assist in meeting the organization's objectives.

What specific employment barriers can Informational Interviewing help you overcome?
Informational Interviewing can help you overcome four common job-hunting obstacles.

1. You may lack knowledge about suitable jobs for which you can qualify with your background. Informational Interviewing can allow you to learn more about the job titles, duties and personality traits of people in fields that others with your background have entered.

2. You may lack relevant work to get the career position you want. Informational Interviewing will enable you to ask for specific suggestions for acquiring this experience, either through additional coursework, internships, entry level jobs, etc. In addition, a lack of experience can often be compensated for by knowledge of an organization's structure, services and problems. Having this knowledge will enable you to uncover unmet needs within the organization that the skills you do possess can help address.

3. In many fields, few jobs are ever openly advertised. A job hunter may not come into contact with these jobs if he/she does not know where to look. Some employment specialists estimate that only about one job in six is ever advertised in a classified ad, personnel office, or on a placement office bulletin board. The rest are "discovered" and filled through word-of-mouth between professional colleagues. Unfortunately, most college students and recent graduates feel that they do not have access to knowledgeable and influential people in their desired career field. Informational Interviewing can help job seekers meet and develop rapport with these people.

4. Most job hunters only ask personnel representatives and receptionists for information about job opportunities. Very often these individuals do not have knowledge about the total range of jobs available, the feasibility of non-traditional jobs, or of the existence of jobs that are not advertised in writing. Informational interviewing allows you to get the above information from people who have it, i.e. people performing the jobs in which you are interested, or their immediate supervisors.

Are people willing to spend time talking about their Career Fields?
People working in a field that interests you will often be flattered if you ask for their advice. This is simple human nature! Their advice, as well as the information they can provide about their careers if that you are seeking when interviewing for information.

How do I locate individuals to interview?
You will want to identify, by name, the person you wish to interview so that you are contacting an individual, not a job title. If you cannot find the name, but know the kind of work in which you are interested, you may call and ask the name of the person in charge of the section or division that handles the function in which you are interested. For example, you may want to ask about sales, research, budget administration, public relations, government relations, conference organizing, library, etc. In some cases you
may wish to ask the name of the person who is working on that particular problem area, issue or concern which is of special interest to you.

**How do I arrange an Informational Interview?**

After you have researched an organization and identified the person with whom you wish to speak, you may arrange an informational interview. Develop your most comfortable approach.

- Be well-prepared
- Start with people who are "low threat" — family, friends, alumni, etc.
- Practice in an area where you feel you have nothing to lose.

**Start with a low-priority organization**

There are five ways to contact an individual you wish to meet:

- Telephone the person directly
- Email the person directly
- Write a letter and follow up with a phone call.
- Drop in on the person and ask if you can be seen without an appointment
- Have one of your personal contacts arrange an appointment for you. Make sure your contact clearly understands what your mission is.

Pursue your own contacts. People you already know can lead you to people who are working in your field.

**How do I conduct the Informational Interview?**

Remember that your purpose is to gather information from someone who is working in an area of interest to you — you are not asking for a job. You are searching for information that will help you to understand the realities of working in that field. You will be doing the interviewing. Be sure to take good notes.

Here are some questions you might want to ask of people working in occupations:

- What is your job like?
- What do you do in a typical day?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation?
- What social obligations go along with a job in your occupation?
- Are there organizations you are expected for join?
- Are there other things you are expected to do outside of work hours?
- What things did you do before you entered this occupation?
- Which of these things have been most helpful?
- What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?
- How does a person progress in your field?
- What is the best way to enter this occupation?
- What are the advancement opportunities?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this particular occupation?
- Could you suggest any other people to whom I could talk with who work in this field or in related fields?
How do I follow up after my Informational Interview?

Record Keeping
Keep careful records of your informational interviews. You will want to spend some time soon after you interview evaluation what you have learned and organizing the names and addresses of new contacts. These will prove very helpful when you actually begin your job search.

Thank You Notes
They should be sent to each person you talked with at any length. A few lines can indicate your appreciate of their time and the value you derived from the interview. This gesture of old-fashioned courtesy can also help you to be remembered.

Re-contact these Individuals Periodically
Tell them the results of your visits with the people they recommended you contact. If you find articles in newspapers, magazines, or journals that might be of interest to an individual whom you have interviewed, send along copies. If you keep in touch with these people and remind them of your interest in their field, they might share with you additional information as they gather it.

Note: Adapted from publications of Georgetown University, the University of Oregon and the University of California, Berkeley.
PART 2: SUMMER FIELD STUDIES

EXPECTATIONS OF THE STUDENT
In return for the commitment of the organization, the student also has a responsibility to the organization as well as to his or her own learning. The Department of Health Policy and Management expects students to act as developing professionals by:

• Participating in setting goals for their own learning;
• Fulfilling the requirement of a full-time position for a minimum of 10 weeks;
• Behaving in an ethically and morally professional manner;
• Performing professional quality work;
• Conducting themselves consistent with the values of the organization;
• Completing academic work and assigned papers relating to the Field Placement.

THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH POLICY AND MANAGEMENT
The Department values its relationship with professional organizations in the health care community. We anticipate the student will behave in a manner that will contribute to nurturing these relationships.

The program is responsible for the students and will be evaluating their progress and achievement. The Department works closely with the student and the preceptor in the development of the student’s Field Study Project. Program Faculty will be available to discuss and consult with students or preceptors on any concerns regarding the placement. The Program Director makes site visits as needed to placements in regional Los Angeles. Site visits allow the preceptor, the student and the Program Director to share progress on the Field Study report, to assess the value of the organization’s placement, evaluate the value of the student’s placement, and solidify the relationship of the preceptor organization and UCLA.

THE ROLE OF THE PRECEPTOR AND THE ORGANIZATION
The Field Studies Program introduces the student to a high level of professional skill and expertise in the health industry. In this manner, students develop their potential. To accomplish this, the Department considers the following when selecting preceptors and placement sites:

• A health services or related graduate degree or equivalent combination of degree and experience;
• An interest in and willingness to foster the student’s learning experience;
• Opportunities for the student to be exposed to a variety of organizational departments, individuals, functions and tasks;
• Student accessibility to the preceptor through a commitment to meeting with the student on a regular weekly basis to discuss and critique the student’s work and progress;
• Centrality of the task to the institution and evolving health care industry;
• Adequate financial and organizational support.
The Department of Health Policy and Management expects preceptors to provide supervision for the student and to assign tasks that meet not only the agency's needs but opportunities for the student’s personal and professional growth as well. Organizations are expected to provide access for students to any data required conducting their projects. The preceptor is responsible for completing any written evaluations of the student and project.

**SCOPE OF WORK AND CONTRACT**
During the first two weeks at your site, you and your preceptor together will complete the scope of work and the contract. The scope of work outlines the expectations you are responsible for with the organization and the specific activities you will conduct to complete your work. The contract ensures that both you and the preceptor are in agreement about these expectations. Both of these forms can be found on our Health Policy and Management CCLE website (https://ccle.ucla.edu/).

**CONSULTING REPORT PROPOSAL**
The final output of this yearlong process is a written analytical professional report based on a problem identified during the summer fieldwork. To begin the process of identifying the project or understanding the underlying concepts or methodology, you are required to prepare a proposal. The purpose of the proposal is to help identify the problem, the relevant methods and data, and to develop the project questions, objectives and tasks to complete the project.

**LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS**
Each student will conduct three to five interviews with selected leaders in the organization. This opportunity allows the student to:
- Gain insight into leadership strengths and abilities
- Interact with executive team members and assess their perception of leadership and important leadership characteristics
- Learn about the organization and the contributions of the leadership team

**STUDENT EVALUATION OF FIELD PLACEMENT**
After you finish your summer internship, you are required to complete and return the yellow Student Evaluation of Field Placement. This form is important to the Program in that it is an assessment by the student of the value of the placement in terms of the quality of the tasks and supervision. These forms are shared with future students who may be completing an internship at the same site. The last page of the Student Evaluation is an assessment of the preceptor. This portion of the evaluation will not be shared with other students. It is primarily for the Program Director to assess whether it would appropriate for future students to work with a given preceptor.