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Transforming student global health initiatives: Developing an interdisciplinary student handbook on global engagement

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Consortium of Universities for Global Health

University of Michigan

Center for Global Health

Science in service of global health equity



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- *Is my project sustainable?*
- *How do I work effectively with local partners?*

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- *Is my project culturally appropriate?*
- *How should I act when I am working abroad?*
- *How and to whom do I disseminate my results?*

Background

- Global health professionals continue to pursue a unifying definition of global health research and the standards it should follow (Stephen & Daibes, 2009)
- Some introductory guidelines for students to follow when conducting research and service abroad (Anderson & Wansom, 2009; Pinto & Upshur, 2009)
- No known guide on standards for effective global engagement specifically for students

Objectives

- To create a *Handbook of Standards for Global Engagement* for use by students before, during, and after their participation in international research and service activities
- To provide necessary information on ethics, project design, professionalism, and logistical concerns to enable students to engage in meaningful work abroad

Process: Developing the Standards

- Multidisciplinary student task force assembled by University of Michigan Center for Global Health (CGH)
- CGH provided faculty, staff, and logistical support for students to create a *Handbook of Standards for Global Engagement*

Process: Developing the Standards

- ◎ Task force met over eight months to draft a document for fellow students preparing to work abroad
- ◎ ~40 students participated in developing the *Handbook*
- ◎ Sources:
 - Published ethical guidelines and consensus statements (e.g. Pinto & Upshur, 2009, ngocodeofconduct.org)
 - Student and faculty experience



Challenges

- ⦿ Large, decentralized university
- ⦿ Audience: students of many disciplines, varying levels of previous experience
- ⦿ Variety of international destinations
- ⦿ Both research and service projects

Results

- ◎ *Handbook* addresses core competencies:
 - Knowledge, attitudes, and practices across disciplines
 - Encourages reflection
 - Enables focused discussion with peers, advisors, and collaborators locally and abroad
- ◎ Designed to be used before (preparation), during (implementation), and after (reflection, dissemination) working abroad

Contents

- ⦿ Ethics of Research Abroad
 - Sustainability, cultural competency, importance of local partners
- ⦿ Project Development with International Partners
 - “How to”: planning, design, implementation, dissemination
- ⦿ Guidelines for Professional Behavior Abroad
 - Daily behavior: competence/limitations, collaboration, professionalism

Contents

- ⦿ Global Citizenship and Advocacy
 - Advocacy in: academia, governmental and non-governmental organizations, public sphere
- ⦿ Logistics of Research and Service Abroad
 - Health, safety, finances

What students are saying

“The fact that this document was prepared *by students for students* is one of its greatest strengths. Challenges and suggestions are laid out in a clear manner, keeping in mind the limitations of student work and resources. This is a great starting point and reference for students to consult throughout their research and learning endeavors.”

Hasan Siddiqi, Medical Student

Next Steps

- ⦿ CGH offers the *Handbook* as a resource to its student affiliates and the public (website)
- ⦿ Student task force to expand the *Handbook*:
 - Training modules
 - Pre-departure course on global health ethics
- ⦿ Working with the University to incorporate the *Handbook* into its campus-wide global portal

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- ⦿ Aim: develop a tool that others can adapt, build on, and use
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Conclusion

- Support from the Center for Global Health and input from students from diverse disciplines were integral to the creation of the *Handbook*
- Challenges and benefits of interdisciplinary approach
- Hope the *Handbook* becomes part of standard preparation for university-sponsored activities abroad

Thank you!

<http://globalhealth.umich.edu/staffandassociatespubs.html>

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