The Service-Learning/Capstone Experience is a 6-credit-hour integrated culminating experience that consists of two parts: (1) three credit hours (150 practical hours) of service learning in an approved organization under the direction of a practitioner (preceptor) and a faculty committee, and (2) three credit hours (150 practical hours) of research or program evaluation that includes a final paper and presentation to committee members, faculty, staff, and students.

The Service-Learning/Capstone Experience (SL/CE) is an essential part of the UNMC MPH Program and is required of all students in the MPH Program. It is designed to provide students with firsthand, scholarly, supervised experience in a practice setting. In the course of this community-based experience, students provide service that contributes to the health of the population while learning and further developing public health competencies under the guidance of established professionals. This experience augments the academic course work, providing students with an opportunity to integrate and apply/test the knowledge, principles, and skills acquired through classroom instruction.

In service learning, there is an equal focus on service and on learning. Activities, outcomes, and scheduled hours are negotiated among the placement site, the student, and the service-learning capstone course faculty member. Service learning is considered a capstone experience that not only allows students to demonstrate basic public health competencies and further develop essential skills, (e.g., collaborative team work, health education intervention skills, and management skills) but also to integrate academic course work with actual public health practice under the supervision of established public health practitioners. The SL/CE develops an environment of academic participation, collaboration, and engagement among students, faculty, and the community.

References


Objectives of Service Learning

Through participation in the Service-Learning/Capstone Experience students will:

1. Develop a capstone project proposal that
   • Clearly demonstrates integrated and applied knowledge, principles and skills acquired through classroom instruction.
   • Meets community identified needs.
2. Perform activities that demonstrate the development/enhancement/application of core public health competencies and describe activities performed to achieve/address these competencies.
3. Demonstrate the development/enhancement/application of concentration specific competencies and describe activities performed to achieve/address these competencies.
4. Develop a capstone paper which reflects the integration of public health knowledge, principles and skills and demonstrates mastery of public health principles, values and practice.
5. Design and deliver an oral presentation of the paper, including the process, background, and results of the project.
6. Develop a beneficial product for the placement site as appropriate.
7. Share project/product with the organization/community as appropriate.

Students will negotiate the specifics of the Service-Learning/Capstone Experience project with the capstone faculty chair and the community placement preceptor. Approaches and methodologies for the experience will vary, including group and individual projects, but each experience will, at a minimum, give students exposure to one or more of the core functions and essential services of public health and a majority of the public health competencies.

Contact the Director of Master's Programs for more information on the Service-Learning/Capstone Experience.