

**University of Toronto Health Studies Placement Program:
Elements for Successful Expansion**

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PROJECT PURPOSE:

In October of 2006, I was hired as a Service-learning Liaison by The Centre for Urban Health Initiatives (CUHI) under the direct supervision of CUHI's Director of Research, Brenda Ross. This position was created out of an identified need to generate recommendations for developing and expanding the placement program (service-learning) available to Health Studies students at the University of Toronto. This project was one of several commitments that CUHI has made toward enhancing undergraduate curriculum in the area of population and public health and supporting the Health Studies program at University of Toronto. To date, placements have been limited to the Hospital for Sick Children and Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care, but interest has been expressed in expanding placement opportunities to include other teaching hospitals and community facilities. This report is a culmination of a brief review of literature on Service Learning, and data collected from other Health Studies programs of Canadian Universities, University of Toronto faculty, and Health Studies student alumni.

The data for this project was collected in three stages: student alumni were interviewed about their experience in placements; faculty from other universities were interviewed to assess how they made their respective programs successful, as well as how they overcame a variety of obstacles in the implementation of the programs; and faculty at the University of Toronto, were asked to assess the current health studies program and make recommendations for improvement. This report also includes some recommendations regarding how various institutions ought to be approached in order to recruit new hosts for the service-learning portion of the Health Studies program.

The primary focus of this report is two-fold: it includes a discussion of why service-learning *should* be a priority for Health Studies, and how to best implement the changes suggested by the recommendations for improvement. This report will discuss how the Health Studies program can offer better, more secure placements for their students.

BACKGROUND:

On November 6th, 2006, Prof. Lorne Tepperman, the Director of Health Studies, discussed the background of our project with us and informed us of the origins of the project and the service-learning liaison position. Prof. Brent Berry, Department of Sociology, and Maria Bueno were asked to write a report in 2005 which they entitled “Pedagogical Benefits and Challenges of Field Placements: Recommendations for the Health Studies Practicum.” Following their report, this project was seen as the next logical step by Prof. Tepperman.

In regards to service-learning placements, Prof. Dennis Magill, former Director of Health Studies and the creator of the service-learning component of the program, had established a link with The Hospital for Sick Children. Service-learning opportunities were initially established as part of UNI200 (Introduction to Research Methods and Statistics in Health Studies), but are now also offered in UNI400 (Practicum in Health Studies), taught by Prof. Rena Tandon. While Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care expressed interest in taking on students, very few placements have been established there – at least not as a component of UNI200 or UNI400.

According to Prof. Tepperman, the service-learning component of Health Studies is in a “fragile” state. While placing Health Studies students in practical settings offers them tremendous opportunities – at present the provision of practical experience is inadequate and requires improvement. In order to achieve this, the Health Studies Program requires a better method of securing and supervising placements.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A brief review of the literature surrounding placement programs illustrates that service-learning is beneficial to the community, the students, and the university faculty involved. This report focuses on the student benefits accrued as a result of service-learning opportunities.

The literature demonstrates a significant trend in academia to place students in a learning environment outside of the classroom. The “hard sciences” offer laboratory experience where one can see first hand what is depicted in lecture. While labs offer many benefits there are also disadvantages. A university laboratory setting is limited in that it is a staged, or idealized, environment. Things generally happen exactly as they are *supposed* to happen. Nonetheless, the hands-on practical experience that students gain in a university laboratory setting is useful preparation for less idealized circumstances in the professional world. By analogy, the next logical step for “soft science” disciplines like Health Studies is to engage students with similar “laboratory” settings – in this case, the community.

Wolffe and Tinney (2006) have shown a causal link between service-learning and undergraduate cognitive and emotional development,¹ arguing that service-learning is linked positively to retention.² Butin believes that by making service-learning and community studies the *medium* of the disciplinary field it becomes possible to use all of the tools of academia to analyse very specific issues. Meaning, by thinking *through* service-learning to transform higher education and society, rather than *about* service-

¹ Michelle K. Wolff and Shannon M. Tinney, Service-Learning & College Student Success (Chattanooga, TN: Chattanooga State Technical Community College, 2006) 57, .

² Wolff and Tinney, 60,

learning, community studies becomes the *mode* of inquiry rather than using the community as a project. The issue of service learning becomes “debatable, questionable, and modifiable – just like any good academic enterprise.”³ Those that argue that service-learning is *not* academic in nature, interpret the activity of learning too narrowly. Students placed outside of the classroom can still be assessed on academic merit. By incorporating relevant course material into the placement, one can learn outside of the classroom just as well as inside; for example, by learning about new relationships – such as the relationship between civic duties and academia – which becomes the object of analyses. The student thereby acquires first hand knowledge of the “real world” in a setting which is ideal for both partners (i.e. the host institution and the student). The student learns from the field, while the host receives a willing participant in its organization. Students will also “receive the opportunities to put theory into practice.”⁴

The benefits and utilities of placement programs do not end with placing students in an institution. In order to be of academic value, *some* academic support must exist in tandem with the external learning experience. This is usually done by combining a classroom lecture section with the placement section. One of the key methods of evaluating students working in the field involves student reflection. This is the crux of meeting curricular goals, as “students must learn to monitor their own learning,”⁵ and must also submit a serious piece of writing for assessment. Without serious

³ D. W. Butin, "The limits of service-learning in higher education," REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION 29.4 (2006): 493, Social Sciences Citation Index ® (1956 to present).

⁴ Kevin Riley, "Service-Learning Evaluation Projects: A Step-by-Step Guide," Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance 77.6 (2006): 39, Proquest Research Library @ Scholars Portal.

⁵ Kerry Purmensky, Weblogs Transform Service-Learning Reflection (Chattanooga, TN: Chattanooga State Technical Community College, 2006) 13. .

reflection, students may not make the connection between class and service.⁶ This sort of reflection can take the practical form of a self-analytical essay, or journal series. The frequency by which students are mandated to submit reflections may vary, but they should be submitted for assessment based on their critical level of engagement with experience and more abstract generalize principles governing their field. Often these written pieces deal with the nature of the research or work conducted and its relationship to ethics, policy, or other areas of public concern.

The one major flaw with a reflective type of assessment is that it is usually submitted at the end of the course. Practically speaking, this often means the students write a “journal” the day before it is due; the reflection may be constructed, falsely remembered, and as a result poorly analysed. With the technological tools currently available to the academic community, however, this learning barrier can be quickly overcome. Purmensky (2006) recommends students keep a blog (websites with dated entries) that can be accessed at any time by the course instructor.⁷ This would be of considerable benefit to both the instructor and the student. Using a blog for assessment will be expanded in the recommendations section.

Every student receives something different from the service-learning experience, and as such:

⁶ Purmensky, 13,

⁷ Kerry Purmensky, Weblogs Transform Service-Learning Reflection (Chattanooga, TN: Chattanooga State Technical Community College, 2006) 13-7, .

there is a need for more intermingling between the professional fields, social sciences, and humanities: service-learning has proven to provide an environment for integration and cross-disciplinary research and problem solving through experimental learning.⁸

As the literature shows, service-learning has become an integral part to the future of academia.

⁸ Sean P. Foley, "The evolution of a service-learning course," Academic Exchange Quarterly 10.1 (2006): 131, Expanded Academic ASAP @ Scholars Portal.

DATA COLLECTION:

Data was collected in three stages: student alumni were interviewed about their experience with placements; other faculty from other universities were interviewed to assess how they made their respective programs successful, as well as how they overcame a variety of obstacles in the implementation of the programs; and faculty at the University of Toronto, were asked to assess the current Health Studies program and make recommendations for improvement

ALUMNI

Health Studies alumni were interviewed by Marlene Searle and Xiao Jin Chen. The questions asked are included in the Appendix (see Document I). Searle and Chen were not only interested in student's placement experiences, but also with the career paths pursued by alumni. As this report is concerned with the community placement of Health Studies students, I will only focus on the results pertaining to the placements (questions 11-25 of their survey). For detailed results of the other questions asked, please see their report, titled "Career and Educational Opportunities of University of Toronto Health Studies Graduates."⁹

Our research showed that there was a significant interest by all alumni in a placement program, whether or not they had actually participated. For alumni who did *not* participate in the placement, it is important to note that *all* students interviewed wished they *had* participated. This illustrates a strong desire for service-learning by Health Studies students. Those who did not participate failed to do so because they

⁹ Marlene Searle and Xiao Jin Chen, Health Studies Career Research Assistant Report (n.p.: n.p., n.d.).

were unaware of the option, exemplifying the gap in communication that exists between program administrators and students. While many students stated a desire to graduate with “real world” experience, they were unaware of the opportunities provided for them through the program to do so.

Our research shows that students who participated in a placement found it to be beneficial and worthwhile. Students in UNI200 (Introduction to Research Methods and Statistics in Health Studies) were placed at the Hospital for Sick Children, whereas most students in UNI400 (Practicum in Health Studies) did community based research with various institutions. Some students were given the task of developing a community-based research reference manual. All participants agreed that the placement, whether traditionally academic or otherwise, aided them professionally in their careers. Also, all of the interviewed participants agreed that that the program placement provided them with an advantage over other Health Studies students because they were able to build contacts and develop relationships with referees for future academic and professional endeavours (i.e. for applications for academic posts or employment opportunities).

The interviewed participants agreed that the placement was, overall, a good experience. A majority of students were exposed to scientific research in a hospital setting, with the ability to “shadow” various professionals at various stages of research in a practical setting. This allowed them to learn how to cope with potential problems that could arise and exposed them to other opportunities available to students in the health field – namely, opportunities other than those of doctoring or nursing. Students were able to get inside the clinics and interact with doctors and

patients, asking questions as they arose, thereby learning on a case-by-case, first-hand basis.

The placement program was not without its shortfalls. The purpose of this report was to generate recommendations to *improve* our placement option. Several themes emerged in Searle and Chen's data. Students would have liked a greater variety of placement options rather than being limited to the Hospital for Sick Children. Some recommendations by students include being placed in a public health setting, a sports setting, or a health clinic. This is not to say that they did not enjoy their time at Sick Kids; they did, but more choice would have been preferable. Creating a database of all available host institutions may allow students to pick-and-choose more discriminately, allowing them to find an appropriate setting to explore their research and community interests.

Another complaint from students was a perceived lack of organization. Students would have preferred the placement to have been planned out ahead of time with the host institution, instead of performing last-minute duties, or impulse jobs/activities as the placement progressed. The material that the student is to learn/do should be arranged ahead of time and should be made explicitly clear between the host, the student, and the professor by the use of a contract. Contracts used by Dominique Champeau, Internship Coordinator at the University of Ottawa, can be found in the Appendix (see Document II and III).

FACULTY FROM OTHER UNIVERSITIES

When contacting other universities, a focus was placed on universities with a placement program in Health Studies or in a related interdisciplinary program of study. Contact was made with the University of Ottawa, McMaster University, and Queen's University. The survey questions are included in the Appendix (see Document IV). These questions were asked to frame the conversation about their placement programs.

Interviews were conducted via phone, and interviewees were encouraged to stress what they felt was most important, within the framework of the questions. Although more direct contacts would have been preferred, these three universities yielded findings and gave sufficient information that agreed with the literature, and with Berry and Bueno's recommendations.¹⁰

The following section will focus on each university's placement procedure, highlighting their approaches and suggestions, starting with Ottawa, McMaster, and ending with Queens.

University of Ottawa:

Dominique Champeau, the Internship Coordinator at the University of Ottawa, offered extensive information and documents detailing best practices on securing placements. The documents contain many forms that serve as a crucial link between

¹⁰ Brent Berry and Maria Bueno, Pedagogical Benefits and Challenges of Field Placements: Recommendations for the Health Studies Practicum, 2005 (n.p.: n.p.).

the university and the host institution (e.g. agreements, evaluations, etc.). A sample of her forms can be found in the Appendix (see Documents II, III, and V).

As an internship coordinator, Champeau's main responsibility is to make sure students are placed appropriately. She single-handedly places about 250 students per year and is in the process of hiring an assistant. She articulated that without a dedicated Placement Coordinator to aid Faculty, the process of placing students, and juggling one's current work load, becomes too great.

Champeau stressed that it is absolutely crucial that the coordinator screen the host institution first. One of the main responsibilities of the coordinator is to find *appropriate* host institutions. Her method of screening will be referred to as the "how-what-how" interview. Champeau determines *how* the student will help at the institution, *what* the student's role within the organization will be, and *how* the student is to be graded academically for the work performed. This can usually be done with a basic contract. Contracts should be written between the host institution and the student,¹¹ and between the student and the coordinator and/or professor of the class¹² to accurately reflect the "how-what-how" that is to be achieved.

Another critical role of the coordinator is to establish a link with the host institution. This is done easily enough by simply reading the yellow pages and making phone calls. If a student is interested in a specific topic, the coordinator does the research to find an appropriate institution (after a brief meeting with the student), or if the coordinator has already made contacts, a suitable contact would simply be called.

¹¹ Document II of the Appendix,

¹² Document III of the Appendix,

Alternatively, students can find their own placement, if they are keen to do so. While self-arranged placements should be encouraged and supported, the coordinator should still meet with the institution to discuss the how-what-how of the placement, and establish a contract with the host to enforce it. When contacting potential placements, the coordinator should stress that placements are unpaid. Host institutions appreciate the fact that they will be receiving unpaid help; and somebody very keen to work and learn.

The coordinator should also enforce the academic credit portion of the placement, which would include some type of assessment by the supervisor of the student from the host institution. This assessment should be made as easy as possible for the supervisor of the student to complete. If an assessment form that is easy to fill out is provided,¹³ it is more likely to be filled out correctly, and in a timely manner. Champeau uses generic forms that the host institution (usually the student's supervisor) completes. She recommends three assessments: two of which are Likert-type questions (indicating strength of agreement or disagreement with a statement) with a section for comments; and one which is a "full assessment" at the end of the placement. This last evaluation form consists of a written component by the supervisor of the student's performance. Evaluations are based on the expectations outlined in the initial contract, and a section where the supervisor will provide an overall "grade" for the student.

Champeau also recommends students keep a daily journal/log-book which would be submitted at the end of the placement to the course instructor. The student should

¹³ See Document V of Appendix

also submit a written report that gives a detailed description of the host institution (its mission, objectives, organizational layout, and where students were situated within that layout), overall experience, own progression, learning outcomes, personal reflections, and recommendations for improvement. This piece of writing, as well as the reflective essay, is to be assessed by the professor of the course. Any recommendations for improvement should also be communicated back to the internship coordinator.

McMaster University:

Ruthanne Talbot, the Community Education Coordinator at McMaster University, places students from a multitude of disciplines within her faculty. Talbot is not the instructor for the courses, though one of her responsibilities is to ensure a database of potential hosts is always up to date, with appropriate contact information available. The instructor of the course outlines what he/she feels would be appropriate for the student, while the student would search through Talbot's database for a potential match. If the student can not find anything of interest, they approach the course instructor, not Talbot, about the appropriateness of other placements. Therefore, here too, students are encouraged to find a placement themselves. If they are interested in finding a placement outside of the database, they are permitted to do so. A database of potential placements gives students the option of accessing the information available about the host institutions and making informed choices of where they wish to be placed. This database serves as a helpful tool for the Placement Coordinator, as well.

Inquiries, to secure a placement, are made prior to the start of the course to assess which host facilities are looking for from a student. Sometimes, the placements are not appropriate for academic credit, or the placements are in a group setting. Placement appropriateness needs to be addressed by the course instructor, who may want the project to be independent; other times, a group of students can be placed together with a host institution and work on a group project. Again, this will depend on what is expected of students.

Talbot identified the challenge of ensuring forms are completed properly and submitted on time. She has found that a helpful way of making sure the forms are filled out in a timely manner is to include the completion of the forms as a percentage of the overall grade of the student, and to also make the forms absolutely mandatory. Thus, the student does not receive credit for the course without the forms completed by a certain date. If these two conditions are enforced, the student has no choice but to fill in the necessary documentation.

To help relieve some of the pressure on instructors, the Community Education Coordinator holds information sessions *before* classes begin to discuss potential placements for students in the upcoming term/year. Talbot discusses the database and any special projects that host institutions may be considering. This information session is very important for both the professor/instructor of the course *and* the students.

Queen's University:

Melody Monte, the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies Assistant Coordinator at Queen's University, explained that placement is strictly between the student and the professor, similar to the current University of Toronto Health Studies placements (Prof. Rena Tandon finds the placement individually for each of her UNI400 students). At Queen's, students complete a form for what the course curriculum is to be. With the professor, the student determines what is to be achieved. Each student must be graded on a similar scale, which makes it mandatory that each student discusses their own particular project with the professor, ensuring that no student is placed in a setting where much more would be expected of them. Each student is graded as fairly as possible, relative to the other students in the class.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FACULTY

Prof. Rena Tandon, instructor of UNI400 (Practicum of Health Studies) and Prof. Shauna Brail, instructor of INI306 (a similar practicum based Urban Studies course), shared the benefits and challenges faced by instructing their respective practicum courses.

Prof. Rena Tandon informed us of some of the challenges she encountered and has made some recommendations for improvement. One area of concern is of grading students both fairly and on academic merit. As students are placed in different types of environments, it is difficult to make sure each student is being graded "the same." Different students have different goals. For instance, some are looking to improve their grant writing skills, others are seeking to improve their ethical writings, while

others are placed doing research (e.g. data collection). As each student is performing considerably different tasks, grading each student “the same” on their achievements becomes increasingly difficult. Tandon understands that there is no set requirement, but she would like a common grading scale to identify the minimal requirements for the achievement of certain grades. While aware of the official University of Toronto Grading Practices Policy, she has found that this grading scale is not easily adapted for use outside of the traditional classroom. Therefore, she has encountered challenges in determining evaluation criteria.

Tandon would like to establish a standard system for host institutions to use as an evaluation tool. Champeau’s assessment forms would serve as an ideal template. The host would complete generic forms as a series of evaluations throughout the course. These forms should be provided and made simple to complete. Champeau has found that this is the most convenient method for external evaluation. With a predetermined evaluation form, the instructor can ask the host to evaluate what the instructor wants evaluated (i.e. material relevant for academic merit). Of course, the form can also contain a “comments” section that can be used for additional comments by the host institution for anything *they* feel is relevant.

Prof. Tandon feels that a minimum of four hours per week in the placement setting is sufficient. However, difficulties may arise in the evaluation process if the host would like more or less of the student’s time. Another challenge involves the supervision of students. Tandon feels that she, herself, is not capable of supervising all the students, all of the time. Prof. Tepperman would like twelve to fourteen Health Studies

students placed each year through UNI400, while Prof. Tandon feels that as things currently stand, she would only be able to place and “look after,” a maximum of ten.

Based on the aforementioned challenges, Prof. Tandon has considered some alternatives to the current placement model. She recommends consolidating contacts. A comprehensive list of all placement opportunities would be a valuable tool for effectively managing large groups of students and monitoring their relationship with the host institution. This list would include all host institutions as well as relevant research teams within the university. While the inclusion of the stages at which the university’s relevant research projects are at would be ideal, this list would be extremely difficult to maintain, as once it was complete, it would be outdated. Such a task could be fulfilled by a Placement Coordinator. Making this database accessible would allow students to do a lot of the background work, freeing up Tandon’s time, and empowering students to be autonomous in their decisions.

Dr. Shauna Brail, Department of Geography and Program Planning, identified some potential problems and possible solutions. Brail feels it is best to approach small organizations, as she has found that they are more adaptable and less burdened by large bureaucracies, making it easier for them to accept students. She also attends as many events as possible, promoting her internship program and establishing new connections with potential host institutions or organizations. After finding a suitable host, Brail will try and establish personal contact with the organization firstly through email, then through telephone conversations. She has found that maintaining communication throughout the year is beneficial. From a student perspective, Brail has noticed that internships raise student confidence and may lead to a paid positions.

On the flip side, students often complain of a “heavy” work load of her course. For one credit, students are required to commit eight hours per week to their placement, in addition to attending weekly seminars. Students are evaluated through weekly journals and seminar attendance in lecture/class – exactly as the literature and interviewees have suggested, in addition to a number of academic assignments that incorporate their placement experience.

While students and hosts are usually very positive about the experience, students are occasionally poorly matched. The database recommended by Talbot would solve this potential mishap by reducing the number of mismatched students. If students were to first do the preliminary research themselves, they would be able to screen and determine which institutions would best suit their needs and desires.

Another drawback that can arise is that sometimes the hosts expect too much from the students. In order to remedy this potential problem, Champeau suggests that agreements, or “contracts,” should be made, and signed, between the host institution and the student (as well as between the student and the professor) *prior* to the student beginning the placement. This way, the host will know exactly how much to expect from the student, and the student will know how far to take the project. Establishing a how-what-how early on can reduce the chances of the host institution exploiting the student. If anything is to be done outside of the contract, such tasks would be made known to the student, host, and professor through open discussion. This would ensure that the student is not “pressured” into feeling that more work is necessary than the amount already agreed upon.

Students who speak English as a second language are also much more difficult to place. But, as Toronto is a very multicultural city, perhaps the Placement Coordinator, aware of the limitations of placing a student whose mother tongue is not English, can establish some contacts within some of Toronto's many diverse communities.

Interestingly, Brail believes the coordinator of the placement positions, and the instructor teaching the course in which the positions are offered, should be the same individual, as a close connection between the two parts of the course must be maintained. While this suggestion may work best in specific contexts, when considering *expanding* the placement option within Health Studies, I question the effectiveness of this proposal. A Placement Coordinator can place over 250 students, such as Dominique Champeau, from the University of Ottawa, does. A professor, who acts as the coordinator *and* professor, such as Prof. Rena Tandon may not be able to place nearly as many students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

First and foremost, the introduction of a Placement Coordinator must be the considered to take the most weight. Prof. Brent Berry, in 2005, made the same recommendation, calling their title “field coordinator.” As I have used the term “Placement Coordinator” quite heavily, I will continue to address it as such, but their responsibilities are exactly the same. The Placement Coordinator’s main responsibility would be to find, establish, secure, and keep updated a database of actual and/or potential host institutions. Placements that offer service learning beyond involvement or exposure to research should be considered. This individual would also have to be responsible for a database of sorts, preferably electronic, for greater accessibility, with all relevant information on the host institutions. An electronic database, accessible from a link on the UNI400 website would be a great resource. As students read about the placement opportunities, they could access a direct link to the database, and further research and view all of the available options open to him/her. This would increase interest in the program and its innovative learning opportunities.

It should be made clear within the database that students would also have the option of finding their own placement, should they choose to do so. This would, of course, increase the number of host institutions within the database. Placements arranged through a students own initiative, could serve as potential hosts for future students, and would be added to the database. This would increase its size and subsequently reduce the workload of the Placement Coordinator.

The second recommendation is to “advertise” the placement option heavily. Once a Coordinator has been hired, he/she needs to talk with professors and students to

identify the students' interests. The Placement Coordinator should make announcements in all Health Studies courses. This would include, but not be limited to, UNI200 and UNI300. It is crucial that student awareness and interest is peaked before their fourth year, if the placement option is going to continue to be offered in fourth year. If, however, it is to be offered in second year again (i.e. UNI200), then the interest of the student must be peaked during their first year. In order for students to want to take the course, they must be aware of its existence, and take any and all prerequisites. To make placement opportunities accessible, the program must be "advertised" in strategic locations. Publicizing the option can be done in a face-to-face classroom announcement, as well as with a section on the Health Studies website dedicated solely to service-learning. It has already been determined that the majority of students who learn about Health Studies do so from the program website.

While this report highlights the value of a Placement Coordinator, it may be important to note that the coordinator does not have to be limited to Health Studies. This coordinator can work in tandem with other departments, or perhaps solely within University College programs. It would be a worthwhile consideration to have a University College wide Placement Coordinator. Hilary Browning, Coordinator of Academic Services at University College, would be able to give better details to that effect. With this option, the Placement Coordinator can "piggy-back" multiple disciplines and create a wider network of contacts, who, in turn, may know of other contacts, thereby snowballing the creation of a database of host institutions in a relatively short time. For research placements, this coordinator should look at all institutions within the university to gauge where all relevant research projects are

located. A service-learning experience could be a research portion of a project already in motion from another department, within the university itself.

With the introduction of a Placement Coordinator, concerns of time consumption are alleviated. The major complaint coming from all players (students, hosts, and lectures) is that of time-management. Students complain that the placement option consumes too much time while faculty complain that the “hunting” of host institutions consumes too much time, and hosts complain that evaluating students consumes too much time. Faculty would no longer need to concern themselves with finding suitable host institutions, as that would be the responsibility of the Coordinator. The Coordinator and the professor of the course must stay in contact, of course, as the professor would supply criteria for host selection and placement expectations. That said, once the Coordinator knows what to look for, he or she can then independently find and secure the actual placements.

The Placement Coordinator should also be responsible for creating and disseminating all forms to the host institutions for evaluation of students. Generic forms should be made as easily readable and clear as possible, increasing the likelihood of successful, and their timely completion. This is extremely important, as a big portion of the student grade will be derived from host assessments. These forms should be Likert-type style, allowing ease of completion. The final assessment, of three, would need to be more in depth for proper assessment, yet such a detailed evaluation would be limited to only one form – to be completed at the end of the placement. If the form is developed ahead of time, the host would be able to consider the form well before it is due for evaluation.

Time constraints for students are separate matters entirely. Four to eight hours, at the placement location, and three hours of class time per week, is a considerable portion of time for one course – and one credit. To solve such a problem, perhaps the placement could offer two credits; one credit for the three hour lecture, readings, and the exams that would accompany the lectures; and one credit for the placement itself. However, if this were the case, two major pieces of work would have to be submitted for assessment. This is currently being done, anyway. Currently, there is a report that is submitted along with regular reflective journal entries. Submitting the reflective piece as a blog may relieve burden on both the student and instructor, as it allows for more convenient submission and marking.

The blog could be submitted weekly, after attending the placement. This should be on a university wide accessible domain, allowing the professor to read and evaluate the student's progress at any time the professor feels is necessary or convenient. With a publicly assessable blog, students would be compelled to write their updates weekly, as the professor can access the website for continual assessment. With this method of evaluation, two major pieces of writing would still be assessed, but one of the pieces would be assessed continually, throughout the year, making it more manageable.

CONCLUSION

The high level of student demand and benefits of service-learning has led us to seriously consider the reasons why the Health Studies program does not have a dedicated and efficient service-learning component. It is clear that placements offer students a multitude of advantages over their peers: potential research opportunity, field experience, and even potential future employment. However, academic merit must also become an integral part of the placement program, if a service-learning component is to be assessed for academic course credit.

Placement options in Health Studies at the University of Toronto have encountered some difficulty in becoming established as a normative component of the program. To ameliorate the situation, service-learning needs to become an integral part of the Health Studies program. This may be easier to achieve if a Placement Coordinator, who worked closely with instructors teaching practicum courses, were to help find suitable host institutions and to facilitate the placement of students for the instructor. This Coordinator does not have to be limited strictly to Health Studies, but can work within a range of other disciplines, perhaps strictly within University College. It is recommended that the Health Studies program make contact with Dawn Britton, Partnership Coordinator at the Centre for Community Partnerships at the University of Toronto, who would be aware of individuals presently in such a role at the university.

To ensure service-learning becomes an integral part of Health Studies, the program needs to garner more student interest in learning outside of the classroom. This should be done through promotion to ensure students are aware of the option. As

Searle and Chen's research shows, there is a demand and interest from Health Studies' students in pursuing studies of academic nature outside of the classroom. Unfortunately, they are currently unaware of the options available to them, and therefore restricted in gaining a more fulfilling university experience because of this limitation.

One way of remedying this gap in communication would be to better document the advantages of service-learning on the Health Studies website, <<http://www.utoronto.ca/healthstudies>>. Renaud Boulanger, a Representative of the Health Studies Student Union, has made ongoing recommendations for the improvement of the Health Studies website. Boulanger's recommendations have included changes to the layout of the website, as well as making it more accessible to prospective students. He also hopes to incorporate Searle's and Chen's aforementioned report.

Currently, one way the Health Studies program promotes itself is to target large, first year classes (e.g. PSY101), in order to attract students *into* the Health Studies discipline. However, Health Studies needs to adopt an approach aimed at current Health Studies students in order to increase awareness of opportunities available to those presently enrolled in the program. One means of addressing this issue would be to hire a program administrator (for example, a Placement Coordinator) who could make presentations in various Health Studies courses (e.g. UNI200, UNI300) about the placement option. This individual's mandate would be to generate student enthusiasm for placement opportunities, as well as address any concerns raised by the students regarding their experiences in the program. This coordinator should stress

the advantages of completing a service-learning course in order to “sell” the idea to current Health Studies students, and to render the program a central, integrated part of Health Studies curriculum.

APPENDIX

DOCUMENT I: HEALTH STUDIES ALUMNI SURVEY

Introduction: We understand that you are a member of the Health Studies alumni. As we are currently seeking to improve the Health Studies program for current and future students, we were wondering if you could provide us with some valuable input. If you could spare some time to answer a few questions regarding your experiences while enrolled in the program and your current situation after graduating, we would greatly appreciate it.

Health Studies

1. When did you graduate?
2. What attracted you to the Health Studies program? How did you hear about it?
3. Did you complete a major or specialist in the Health Studies program?
4. If you completed a major in Health Studies, what other major did you combine your studies with? Which major do you feel is more applicable to your current job/program of study?
5. If you were a specialist in the Health Studies program, do you think that your sole focus on Health Studies equipped you with the necessary skills and background education for your current job/area of study?

Current situation

6. Are you currently working or studying? If employed, what is your current occupation?

If in school, what is your program of study?

7. Did you find that when you applied for jobs/schools, those receiving your applications understood the term “Health Studies”? What did they imply it to mean?

8. Are there any particular skills or areas of knowledge that you acquired through the Health Studies program that benefited you when applying for your current occupation/program of study?

If yes, do you find that those skills/areas of knowledge are still currently of use in your work?

9. If currently studying, do you hope to pursue a future career related to health?

10. (*ask this question if they are working) The Health Studies program is currently working to develop a service-learning /field placement program for our students. Would you be interested in having a student participate in a field placement or job-shadowing program under you?

Placement Program

The Health Studies program offers placement options for students enrolled in UNI200 and UNI400.

11. Did you participate in the UNI200/UNI400 placement option? (If no, go to question 18)

12. If so, where were you placed?

13. Given greater options, where would you have liked to have been placed?

14. Can you tell me what kind of experience you had with the placement? (For example: what did you enjoy most/least? The advantages/disadvantages?)

15. If you were to change anything with the placement option, what would you do differently? How could the placement option be improved?

16. How were you graded, academically, for the placement?
17. Do you feel that the placement option gives an advantage/disadvantage to Health Studies students?
18. Do you think the placement option could aid you professionally? (For example: if you were not sure what you were looking for – would it help you find work or lead to post-graduate opportunities?)
19. Why did you *not* participate in the placement option?
20. In retrospect, would you have liked to participate in the placement option?

Wrapping up

22. Do you have any suggestions for improving the Health Studies program, such as any additional features to the program that you think would further benefit students when they graduate?
23. Would you mind if we display a profile and photo of you on the health studies program website?
24. Would you mind if we contacted you in the future?
25. Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for your time. We really appreciate your feedback!

DOCUMENT II: PERSONAL CONTRACT

LSR 4255

Internship in Leisure Studies

Name and Student N^o :

Date:

Knowing that I represent the School of Human Kinetics, Leisure Studies Program and the University of Ottawa, I agree to follow these guidelines:

1. To be punctual at all times;
2. To be honest regarding my personal limits, strength, weaknesses;
3. To be able to express myself, my opinions and recommendations in a respectful and professional manner;
4. To be able to ask for help when I need it;
5. To hand in all papers and reports within the allotted times;
6. To hand in quality papers and reports at all times.

OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS:

I have established the following objectives:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Note: It is understood that these objectives can be changed and modified at all times. In that case, you will need to inform your Supervisor and submit the changes to the Internship Coordinator as soon as possible.

I have the following expectations:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Note: It is understood that these expectations can be changed and modified at all times. In that case, you will need to inform your Supervisor and submit the changes to the Internship Coordinator as soon as possible.

Signature:

Note: The masculine gender is used to lighten the text.

DOCUMENT III: SUPERVISOR CONTRACT

**LSR 4255
Internship in Leisure Studies**

Name and Student N^o :

Name of the Supervisor:

Name of the organization:

Date:

CONDITIONS REGARDING THE INTERNSHIP:

Start date:

Targeted end date:

***Placement is unpaid**

Targeted # of hours:

Work schedule (this schedule can be modified at any time):

Tasks and responsibilities:

It is understood that these tasks and responsibilities can change at any time during the internship. If the change(s) is important, modifications will need to be made and agreed upon and a revised one will need to be submitted to the Internship Coordinator.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Note: Tasks, responsibilities and pre-determined objectives are tools to help the student-intern live a rewarding work experience in a professional field. The Personal Contract should be used when completing this form. The Supervisor can refer to this contract when assessing the work of the student.

Signature of the Supervisor Student signature

Note: The masculine gender is used to lighten the text.

DOCUMENT IV: QUESTIONS ASKED TO OTHER UNIVERSITIES

Introduction: *(This is to be in the manner of a conversation.)* Hello, would I be able to speak to _____, please? Hi, my name is Marino. I'm a third year Health Studies student of the University of Toronto and I have been hired by CUHI (Centre for Urban Health Initiatives) and U of T's Health Studies to try and further develop and expand our current student placement opportunities. I'm calling because I would like to ask you some questions about your Health Studies Program. In particular, concerning the placement opportunities you offer to your students.

Basically, I would like to ask about how you developed your placement options, and how you established your current program. I've only 10 questions and this shouldn't take longer than 15 minutes of your time. But, I am interested in your comments because we believe that service-learning is a valuable asset to students (and to employers, alike) and would like to learn how you incorporated it into your program. Would you mind if I record our conversation? I would like to make sure I accurately reference what we discuss. (I am calling you via Skype an internet telephony company, and there is a record option available to me that I would like to take advantage of.) Thank you.

Can you describe your placement program? (*Pause: let them talk, or lead them with:*
For example, what are its strengths? Weaknesses? Where do you place students (if
you do place them at all)?) **{Everyone, I am asking this because with some of the
University web-pages, I am uncertain if there actually is a placement option
available.}**

1. Is the placement optional or mandatory?
2. How did you initially set this up?
3. What kind of barriers/obstacles did you encounter when trying to initially
organize this? And how were those barriers overcome?
4. How are students graded academically in this setting?
5. How many hours per week does a student usually do in their placement? (Ask
this only if not answered in the previous question.)
6. Ok, so, generally, what kind of *student* feedback do you get?
7. How about the *host institution*; what kind of general feedback do you get from
them?
8. Is there anything else you think I need to know? For example, can you offer
any advice? (Recommendations/resources/contacts; that sort of thing.)
9. And lastly, if anything else of importance crosses your mind (that we have
neglected to discuss) can I leave you my email so that you can email me that
information, so I can consider it, as well?

Thank you for your time and comments. I really appreciate your help. Goodbye.

DOCUMENT V: TOOL TO ASSESS/EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF WORK

LSR 4255 INTERNSHIP IN LEISURE STUDIES

Name and Student n^o :

Supervisor:

Title:

Organization:

Note: This document is a tool that can be used to assess/evaluate the quality of work of the student intern.

Date	Task/Project	Activities	Required Time	Evaluation	Comments	Initials: Supervisor

Evaluation:

n/a: non-applicable **0:** unacceptable **1-2:** weak **3-4:** average **5-6:** very good

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