

Intern of Interest

"It's so cool!" – Inaya Wahid

Name: Inaya Wahid

Major(s)/Minor(s): Health Administration and Policy, Track III; Minor in Biology

Where are you interning?

This semester I am interning at the Delaware Public Health Association/Delaware Academy of Medicine in Newark, Delaware. There I am working under Dr. Kate Smith who is the Program Manager at the organization. Concurrently, one of my projects with the Academy/DPHA has me work at the University of Delaware's Partnership for Healthy Communities under their Program Coordinator Ms. Noël Duckworth.

How would you describe your internship experience?

My internship is often independent work as I am tasked at looking into Delaware's Health Improvement Plan. At the Academy/DPHA, my job is to look into Delaware's health trends to assess the needs of the community. Because Delaware is relatively small, I also research the states surrounding Delaware. By looking at Pennsylvania and Maryland, I am able to understand what is going on in their area as well as what programs in these other areas have been proven effective and successful. The goal of my research is to develop a hypothetical program that could be implemented in the area to improve the community. At the Partnership for Healthy Communities, we work with the Department of Health Sciences at The University of Delaware to answer the question "How can we be more effective of actually making a change in the area around us?" My internships also include meetings and conversations with teams of nonprofits, as well as University of Delaware coordinators and professors who have experience with evaluation methods on how to improve a community.

How did you find this internship/what interested you in this internship?

I myself looked into the Delaware Public Health Association and reached out to their organization for a possible internship. I had previously interned at the Cecil County Health Department with their Health Improvement Plan and the Academy/DHPA thought I would be a good fit in helping them with their state's plan. There they connected me with the Partnership for Healthy Communities who are currently looking into the annual report based on the state's Health Improvement Plan. My experience ultimately brought me to where I am.

What do you enjoy the most about your internship so far ?

I enjoy being able to explore what is actually out there in the world through research. I am able to use new technologies as well as learn about new organizations and opportunities I have never heard of before. Also, the Partnership for Healthy Communities' professional organization is truly remarkable. I am able to witness this organization through meetings as their staff are able to recall and manage information efficiently. The University of Delaware also has advanced technology to make it easier to visualize different health outcomes.

What about your internship was the most surprising to you?

I think being able to see how two separate organizations work to achieve a similar goal is very interesting. Both the Academy/DPHA and the Partnership for Health Communities work to improve the health and well-being of communities in Delaware. I am able to look at the two organizations at a cultural perspective and see how these two places approach the same work in different methods and environments. Their approaches are both community-based and optimistic which is a new style but can hopefully benefit the community.

What was the biggest lesson you learned through your experience?

One of the lessons I have learned so far is it is important to know what is going on around you. Both Dr. Kate Smith and Ms. Noël Duckworth have such a wide range of knowledge when it comes to health. When you are in charge of such a small area like Delaware you need to be able to know everything. No one has a specific focus, everyone is responsible for understanding a variety of different health outcomes as all aspects of health are commonly related. Although tough, being able to understand a large scope of things is very much beneficial. I see Dr. Smith and Ms. Duckworth attend a million different meetings with a million different people and know that that is what helps them be more effective at what they do. I never realized the importance of taking on a broader focus until now.

What are some connections between what you learned through this experience and what you learned here at UMBC?

There is a definite connection to what I have learned here at UMBC to what I am learning through my internship. The biggest connection is I am able to use what I have learned in Research Methods with Dr. Trevitt and applying it to different studies and programs I am working on at my internship. I also still use the AOK library tools and search engines when it comes to my research. I want to continue to learn program planning and I know they offer a class at UMBC which is something I am interested in taking in the future.

What did you learn about yourself through this experience?

Being able to experience the environment of two different organizations has helped me realize I like the bigger hands-on approach when it comes to public health. The University of Delaware has a larger campus and allows me to be more involved while the Delaware Public Health Association is smaller and the work is more independent. I also have grown to like the freedom the Academy/DPHA has given me. My work is also less formal than the typical academic works I am used to which I have also learned to appreciate. I have only been at my internship for a short time, however, I am excited to learn more about myself as I grow through this experience.

How does this internship relate to your long-term educational or career goals?

I think being exposed to two different environments has helped me understand different organization cultures as well as the different aspects of research I want to focus on in the future. The Partnership for Healthy Communities' interest in making several connections with nonprofits, community leaders and academics is very interesting to me. The work there has motivated me to consider community-based research in the future. The kind of work I am

doing now is also beneficial for building a solid foundation for future internships. Because this is my junior year, I want to use this opportunity to be able to obtain more internships in the future and be able to understand a wider variety of public health concerns. After completing my undergrad I hope to go to grad school and continue research. In the future, I hope to see myself at a large-scale organization conducting research that will be working to improve the community.

To learn more about the Partnership of Health Communities:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qho3278-H_g&feature=youtu.be

