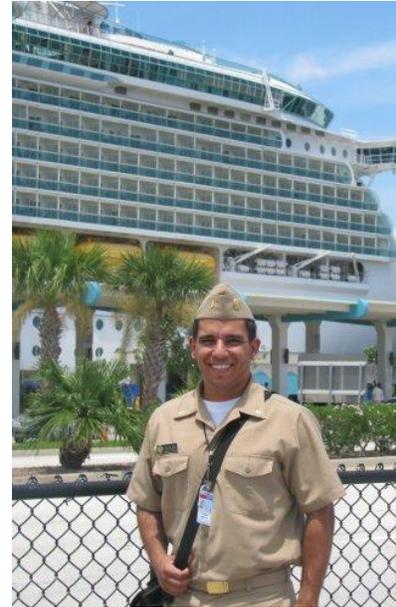


## **James Alan Goggins, Western Carolina University**

### ***JrCOSTEP/SUPEH Intern, Summer 2009***

When I began looking for an internship for the summer, I had a few essentials I wanted from my experience. I hoped my internship would provide an opportunity to work alongside and network with environmental health professionals from a variety of settings. I wanted my internship experience to be dynamic, one that offered an array of professional experiences. I was also looking for an internship where I could learn and grow as a professional, with the hopes of finding my place in the environmental health workforce. I got everything I wanted and more from the Environmental Health Services Branch of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and from the Summer Undergraduate Programs for Environmental Health (SUPEH) intern program.



Thanks to my participation in the SUPEH program and the JrCOSTEP program of the U.S. Public Health Service, I have seen environmental health practices at a variety of levels. At the county level, I participated in food inspections, land-use surveys, hotel and pool inspections, and even tattoo parlor inspections. I experienced the foundations of public and environmental health practices. At the state level, I was able to see a new side of environmental health that dealt more with support for local health departments, disease surveillance, and educational programs, all with a focus on the specific needs of that state. I was also able to discuss potential career paths with professionals in environmental health and inquire about what key steps led them to careers at the state level. I was also able to sit down one on one with professionals in my specific field of interest and get a first-hand account of what their jobs entail. I even had the opportunity to talk to a current Epidemic Intelligence Services officer, which is one of my dream jobs, about her work and how she made her way to EIS.

The majority of my experience was working with environmental health agencies at the federal level. I have been able to work with environmental health professionals from National Park Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Vessel Sanitation Program, and CDC. I think one of the most eye-opening parts of my internship has been learning how diverse the field of environmental health really is. Environmental health professionals work in a wide spectrum of settings, from local to federal, urban to rural, from enforcement to research; with each field presenting unique challenges and rewards.

My time in the SUPEH program has also afforded me a wealth of educational opportunities I could not have gained in any other program. As an intern and as a JrCOSTEP, I attended the U.S. Public Health Service's Annual Scientific and Training Symposium; while attending I listened to Public Health Officers from a wide variety of fields and learn about emerging topics in the fields of public and environmental health. I gained invaluable knowledge about future employment and

educational opportunities. I was also fortunate enough to attend a condensed Environmental Health Training for Emergency Response (EHTER) course. In this training session, I heard from Public Health Officers who participated in a multitude of response efforts, including responders to Hurricane Katrina, post-9/11 anthrax events, and Ground Zero. I also attended the Annual Educational Conference for the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), where I heard from professionals in all fields of environmental health and participated in various educational, training, and networking sessions. The educational opportunities I gained through participating in the SUPEH program are ones I will carry with me throughout my career in Environmental Health.

I cannot think of another internship that would have given me the unique and invaluable experience that I gained from working as a SUPEH intern. I have learned from and worked with top professionals in environmental health. I have been able to work in a variety of environmental health fields, from federal to state to local; my time as a SUPEH intern has shown me the many faces of environmental health. As an intern, I have also had many invaluable educational opportunities that I know I will reflect on later in my career in environmental health. This internship has helped me determine my place in the field of environmental health, and it has provided me with experiences I will carry for a lifetime.