

SECTION 1

1. TPG Summary

The Training Project Grant (TPG) for the Environmental Health Science (EHS) degree program at Western Kentucky University (WKU) was used to support seven (7) students during the 2014-2015 academic year. The EHS program is assigned administratively to the Department of Public Health within the College of Health and Human Services. The program entails a comprehensive education of students in basic and applied sciences with a strong emphasis in environmental and occupational health assessment and control for chemical, biological, and physical factors or stressors of public health importance.

Students who successfully complete the program earn a B.S. degree. There is also a minor in Environmental Studies and a certificate program in Occupational Health and Safety. Our EHS courses are designed to meet the general education, core, and elective requirements. Key program elements and course offerings require that students complete 120 semester hours (a minimum of 70 semester hours of core courses and electives) before graduation. With regards to staffing, the EHS program comprises of five core and several adjunct faculty members who are well-qualified to teach and conduct research in Environmental/Occupational Health and Safety. Although no faculty members were directly supported by the TPG grant, it must be noted that their individual and joint contributions were helpful in not only teaching the core and elective courses, but in providing opportunities for extra-curricular activities and supervising internships and/or research.

2. Relevance to Public Health

There is no gain saying the fact that in today's ever changing workplace environment, the job of an industrial hygienist or environmental health scientist has become very challenging. These professionals act as experts and advisers on various occupational health and safety issues that are multifaceted and in the long run, truly benefit the organization's bottom line. They are trained to address general industrial hygiene, air quality, water quality, food safety, and hazardous waste management issues with a view to reducing the risks of work-related injuries and illnesses that can cause serious public health problems. By working to make the workplace safe and fostering a genuine commitment to caring about the workers and the environment, the professional significantly contributes to increased productivity, reduced workers' compensation and liability costs, and improved morale. It is anticipated that the NIOSH TPG will continue to help train needed practitioners that will address not only the NIOSH priorities, but also meet the needs of South-central Kentucky (an underserved area with regards to environmental and occupational health and safety professionals) as well as the entire state of Kentucky and beyond.

SECTION 2

Program Highlights of High Impact

The TPG for the EHS program at WKU started in July 2014 and is now in its second year. The formation and meeting of the EHS Advisory Board for our B.S. degree program has been instrumental in enhancing and improving the quality of the program and in strengthening external relationships with various stakeholders including public, private, and non-profit organizations that employ graduates of our program. Additionally, discussions had focused on needed curriculum changes, opportunities for internships and professional experience, and continuing education for trainees. The following are some highlights of the EHS Program relevant to NIOSH TPG trainees:

1. A nationwide search was conducted and 2 new faculty lines were filled in the EHS program – one at the Assistant Professor level and the other at the Instructor level. Both faculty members are well-qualified and have relevant expertise in industrial hygiene
2. Two of the trainees are currently enrolled in graduate degree programs in Public Health – one was retained here at WKU and is enrolled in the new MS degree in Environmental and Occupational Health while the other trainee is at the University of Alabama.
3. Two of the trainees have been hired as Environmental Health and Safety Coordinators - one at an automotive parts manufacturing industry in Bowling Green, KY and the other at a food processing plant in Colombia, Georgia. Another trainee who is still a student in our program is currently working as a Health, Safety and Environmental Intern at an industrial paint manufacturing company in Bowling Green
4. The trainees attended the 2014 NIOSH Pilot Research Project symposium at the University of Cincinnati's Department of Environmental Health in collaboration with the NIOSH Education and Research Center. The interdisciplinary focus makes the PRP symposium unique in enriching students in occupational health and safety education and development that are relevant to the National Occupational Research Agenda. Additionally, each trainee wrote a summary reflection paper about their academic experience during the symposium
5. During the 2014-2015 academic year, the trainees attended two occupational health and safety seminars on current issues of occupational health and safety. The first was presented during the fall semester (*Coal Workers Pneumoconiosis: An Ancient Disease That Is Still Among Us*) and the other was presented during the spring semester (*Potential Health, Safety, and Environmental Implications of Hydraulic Fracturing or Fracking.*) The fall seminar was sponsored by the Department of Public Health while the spring seminar was supported funds from the NIOSH TPG.
6. Some students attended and moderated sessions at the 2015 Governor's Health & Safety Conference in Louisville, KY
7. Students were also involved in several academic activities that enriched their learning experiences. These included field trips and tours to such industries as a coal-burning power plant and an elementary school that is the first Net Zero Energy School in the nation
8. One of the trainees (also the President of the Environmental Health Science Students Association) with the support of a core faculty member, visited the Barren County High School to promote and enlighten high school students about our EHS program
9. One of the trainees received the 2014-2015 Outstanding Student award in Public Health
10. Two of the trainees conducted research projects that are relevant to agricultural health.