

## **OHIP 2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

**GRANT NUMBER:** 5T03OH009220-08

**PI:** HARRISON

### **SECTION I**

#### **TPG SUMMARY:**

The primary goal of the Occupational Health Internship Program (OHIP) is to recruit and provide training for the next generation of occupational health professionals. Over the course of the summer internship, each OHIP trainee gains an understanding of the following three training objectives that underlie the program:

- Discuss the importance of work-related health and safety hazards in determining the health of workers and the general community;
- Explain the changing nature of the workforce and importance of designing health and safety interventions to meet the needs of specific and diverse worker groups; and
- Describe the role of occupational health and safety professionals in reducing workplace health and safety hazards.

The second goal of OHIP is to increase diversity in the occupational health disciplines by actively recruiting and mentoring students from minority and immigrant backgrounds including underrepresented minorities (URM). URM individuals are those racial and ethnic populations that are underrepresented in the public health profession relative to their numbers in the general population.

In 2015 we received over 400 applications. As in previous years, the majority of this year's applicants were minorities. Out of the 244 students that participated in the program over the past twelve years, 63% percent were from underrepresented ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Thirty-nine percent of the OHIP students would be included in the URM category. In 2015, 66% of the students were from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Forty-five percent would be included in the URM category. Out of the 244 students that participated in the program over the past twelve years, 80% are fluent in a second language and 13% speak a third language. Thus, many of our students bring special language and cultural skills that are essential to the success of their internship projects. In addition, the majority of our field-based projects serve low-wage and immigrant worker populations. In 2015, 12 of the 15 projects served low-wage or immigrant worker populations from the dairy, agriculture, and food processing industries, day laborers, in-home home aides, blue-collar temporary workers, street vendors, and nail salons.

Each OHIP team is required to complete three "deliverables" during their 9-week internship: (1) Educational materials that can be used by their host organization (union, community-based organization, agency, etc.) to improve worker knowledge of safety and health hazards; (2) Summary of their findings in PowerPoint format to be presented at the end of the summer

through videoconference links; and (3) Written summary reports of project objectives, methods, results and recommendations.

OHIP project personnel and mentors from around the country, each with considerable health and safety experience, work to ensure that the internships will be successful. This includes widespread national recruitment for applicants, thorough selection of projects and student interns, extensive planning of a three-day national orientation training, and committed mentorship and supervision throughout the summer.

Post-summer communication with the trainees solidifies their interest in occupational health. Bimonthly emails offer various occupational health and safety (OHS) opportunities (i.e. jobs, fellowships, events, workshops, scholarships, webinars, etc.) and updates through our OHIP Facebook page keeps our alumni connected with the OHS field. OHIP personnel also offer OHS academic and professional mentorship opportunities following the summer internship. Additionally, a national advisory board, composed of nationally recognized educators and scientists, advise the program on how we can help former interns stay in the field and continue to play a key role in providing overall guidance to the program.

**RELEVANCE:** The overall purpose of OHIP is to expose undergraduate and graduate students to the field of OSH and increase the number of underrepresented minorities in the occupational health professions through a summer enrichment experience. Students are provided with an experienced-based learning opportunity that motivates and inspires them to continue their academic training through graduate programs in the occupational health professions. The training program also serves to increase awareness of work-related injuries, illnesses and hazards among immigrant and low-wage populations, and provide content information and background experience for further study in occupational health and related fields.

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**TPG Web Link:** [www.aoec.org/ohip](http://www.aoec.org/ohip)

## **SECTION II**

### **Program Highlights of High Impact:**

OHIP interns often contribute to organizations and campaigns in ways that have high impact on improving workplace conditions, advancing legislative and policy initiatives, and expanding the capacity of host organizations to address the work-related health and safety concerns of their members.

For example, in the summer of 2015 Dawn Surratt and Adam Kline worked with the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice on a project focused on the occupational safety and health risks of shipyard workers. In August, the two students met with Dorinda Folse, the OSHA Area Director; Angela Fisher, the Regional Investigator for OSHA's Whistleblower Protection Program Region VI; the Compliance, Safety and Health Officers in Louisiana; and other key OSHA staff. In addition, the National Guestworker Alliance, the Louisiana Office of Public Health, and shipyard workers travelled to Baton Rouge for the meeting. The students interviewed dozens of workers and found numerous potential problems/OSHA violations:

- confined space (smoking inside of CS, infrequent check for accumulation of toxic gas accumulation, no watch person, continued exposure to temps over 91 F/33 C);
- welding while standing in water (without any rubber insulation protective gear);
- improvised scaffold construction;
- lack of comprehensive hearing conservation programs;
- lack of heavy metal testing;
- lack of fire drills at the shipyards; and
- workers not being informed of their right to worker's compensation in the event of a workplace injury.

This project will be among the five projects presented at the APHA Annual Meeting in Chicago. Students will also provide any project updates.

***Student Recruitment and Training:***

- OHIP has achieved a great deal since its commencement in 2004, including its recognition as a desirable internship -- with the number of applicants increasing significantly. In 2015, OHIP received over 400 applicants and accepted 29 graduate and undergraduate level students who worked on 15 projects for the summer. OHIP seeks students with cultural and language skills that benefit the majority of OHIP projects. In 2015, 10 graduate level students were funded by NIOSH, the remaining students were funded through the generosity of foundations and individuals. The 2015 project sites were located in California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, New York, and Louisiana.

**New OHIP Sites:** In 2015, there was one new site in New Orleans, Louisiana. OHIP will continue to identify and evaluate sites for program expansion, and pursue additional placements throughout the nation as future OHIP sites.

**Long-Term OHIP Impacts on Participants:** Efforts to track the trajectory of former students through yearly surveys and ongoing contact with alumni has provided insight into the impacts the program has on former students both professionally and personally. This has helped measure OHIP's influence on students' perceptions of work and health, their decisions about future academic and career paths, and it has helped strengthen the program. In late Fall 2015, a survey will be distributed to all former OHIP students (2004-2015). Summary results of the 2013

former OHIP student survey can be viewed on the OHIP website at, [aoec.org/ohip/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/2013-Former-OHIP-Intern-Survey-summary.pdf](http://aoec.org/ohip/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/2013-Former-OHIP-Intern-Survey-summary.pdf).

**Continued Opportunities for Former Students:** OHIP Alumni have been asked to present their summer projects at national conferences/meetings (i.e. six of the 2015 OHIP students will be presenting at the 143<sup>rd</sup> Annual APHA Meeting and Exposition in Chicago. OHIP interns have also been invited to share their project accomplishments through the NIOSH Science Blog. We are currently working with a few student teams to complete those blog posts.

To continue its efforts to provide a pathway into the OHS field after the OHIP trainees complete their summer internship, OHIP staff sends bimonthly emails to its alumni (2004-present) with OHS opportunities (i.e. job postings, events, webinars, fellowships, etc.). In addition, mentorship opportunities are offered to those who are interested in continuing in the field. In return, OHIP alumni provide staff with updates about their careers/academic studies, OHIP impacts (professionally and personally), and any other related information.

#### **OHIP and Online Technology:**

- **Website:** Since 2012, the OHIP application process was accomplished entirely online through its updated website ([www.aoec.org/OHIP](http://www.aoec.org/OHIP)).
- **OHIP Facebook:** In 2012, OHIP created a FB page (<http://www.facebook.com/aoecohip>) which continues to provide OHIP updates and news.
- **OHIP Emails:** For the past several years, OHIP staff has focused efforts to improve communication and provide OHS opportunities (i.e. job postings, events, webinars, fellowships, etc.) to former OHIP students as well as mentorship opportunities to those who are interested in continuing in the field through bimonthly emails.
- **OHIP Survey:** Online technology will be used to survey former OHIP students (2004-2015) and to capture data for analysis.

**Project Impacts and Themes:** Reaching low-wage workers, supporting community based organizations, plugging into organizing campaigns, reaching workers in evermore precarious employment situations – temporary workers, street food vendors, Latino seasonal workers, workers in the nail salon and black hair salon industries, etc., and projects that support policy efforts around workplace hazards.

#### **OHIP Quotes 2015**

The summer OHIP internship experiences often have a profound impact on students in both their personal and professional lives, as reflected in feedback provided during evaluations at the end of each summer:

“It makes sense that it takes time to fix the working conditions. We did a lot of work, but it was not enough. You can never do enough, and you want to. Nothing is easy. One of the goals was to file OSHA complaints. Even though we saw 100 workers, the constraints from OSHA were

frustrating -- having to find problems that were in the last 6 months, temp workers having to be employed there currently... Frustrating. We could not get as far as we wanted.”– Chicago student, SR

“The OHIP summer was a great experience and opportunity to have been a part of. It was hard work and on some days it was frustrating. However, all the hard work that I invested into the project was worth it as I knew my project would help the workers in the long run.” – LA student, JM

“Overall, I feel great about my OHIP summer experience. I was challenged in multiple ways, was able to work with a great research partner, and even had time to explore more of Los Angeles. If I could do it again, I would!” –LA student, RP

“This summer made me consider pursuing a public health degree for the first time. Helped me to see the bridge between farm worker justice, immigration justice and the Spanish language and how I can merge all those things into a public health-related field.” – Marshfield student

“Throughout this summer, I was constantly reminded that things do not always go as planned. Since it was my first exposure to directly interact with workers facing these various issues addressed throughout the report, listening to workers’ stories/experience has made me become more mindful of things I consume, more appreciative of life, and have reminded me of not taking things for granted. The skills I have acquired this summer are transferrable to almost anything I choose to do later on in the future to successfully serve my community. Once again, I am blessed and very grateful for the experience as I continue to further enlarge my knowledge and recognize the importance of public health. Special thanks to everyone who has helped me throughout this experiential learning journey.” – SF student, OLN

“In addition, this internship was a fast-paced lesson in numerous aspects of occupational health research, from planning a project to recruiting subjects to analyzing various types of data. Since I was simultaneously becoming more and more interested in occupational medicine as a career path, I am very, very grateful for this experience as a starting point to further exploring the field of occupational health.” – SF student, AL

“OHIP not only helps in this task by connecting emerging academics with workers, but it helps in creating a new generation of thinkers and researchers who will not limit the scope of their work to analyzing secondary sources, but who will be motivated to roll up their sleeves and get dirty on the field working on issues that affect millions of workers in the United States.” –SD student, MG

“I believe that I set myself up for failure by having unreasonable expectations for this summer. As far as what I expected from OHIP and the ERC, yes my expectations have absolutely been met. All of the staff has been wonderful and I am so grateful. When I say that my expectations weren’t met it is the expectations that I had set for myself. I honestly thought that it was going to be a lot easier than it was, I thought that people would be grateful that we were fighting to

improve working conditions and that they would do whatever they could to help. I had not anticipated the resistance we encountered. I clearly had not considered the tight predicament they were in and the serious misgivings they had with bringing any level of attention to themselves. This roadblock seriously impinged on what I was hoping to get done this summer and for that reason I was unable to meet my own expectations.” -SD student, BF

“My “aha” moment actually came right after one of the hardest moments of the summer. We scheduled our first focus group and none of the half dozen people who said they would be coming showed up. At this point we were struggling to get many surveys and were pretty devastated to have a focus group that nobody showed up to. I remember thinking that our supervisor at the ERC was going to be upset but instead what she said was my “aha” moment and it was something like: In this line of work there are good days and there are bad days; but you’ll never get to the good days if you can’t get through the bad ones. That moment was a turning point because we could have fallen into despair but instead we used it as a catalyst to get as much done with the rest of the time we had left.” – SD student, BF

“It became abundantly clear to me through the course of this work that the passage of a law is not the end, but rather merely the beginning of efforts to ensure workers’ access to more humane working conditions. Moreover, as a burgeoning social work professional interested in the field of mental health care, this summer provided invaluable insight into the impact that a person’s working environment can have on their sense of mental and emotional wellness. I will carry the knowledge I gained and the stories I heard this summer with me as I move forward in my career, remaining mindful of the interconnected nature of occupational safety and health and psychological wellbeing.” – NYC student, MM

“Overall, this experience gave me a glimpse into the lives of hard working immigrants in the Boston area. Being based here in itself was also a very fulfilling experience as it allowed me to learn more about other Latino communities in the country. Education, organizing, leadership, and advocacy were all important components of my OHIP internship. Moving forward, as a future public health professional, I think all of these exposures are imperative in order to best serve underserved communities in the near future.” – Boston student, CO

“This project and my summer as an OHIP intern have been eye opening. Coming from experience in occupational exposures, it was very valuable and grounding to delve into the more social and legal issues that temporary workers face frequently (in some cases more frequently than other blue collar and immigrant workers) like sexual harassment, discrimination, verbal and physical abuse, and wage theft. These things are higher priorities to the workers who come to the worker centers that I worked with and I understand why: wage theft is highly detrimental to workers who are barely scraping by to make rent in an expensive area and discrimination affects the emotional health of workers immediately. At the same time, it was so positive to see organizers who understand this but still push workers to see health and safety as equally important.” – Boston student, MRS

“I applied to OHIP because I wanted to be inspired. As an epidemiologist, I often deal with numbers and statistics. I think that sometimes we forget that behind those numbers and p-values are real people. This project and OHIP gave me a unique perspective to see beyond numbers. My experience as an OHIP intern this summer gave me the motivation to keep my involvement the study, and have truly made a large impact in my personal and professional development.” –LA student, CC

“One case that really stuck to me was a case of Ana. She is a college graduate in the Philippines and moved to the U.S. to be close to her family. She spoke to me in Tagalog, narrating her experience when she started as a caregiver in a board and care facility. The sleepless nights, the non-existent breaks and the high demand of the work traumatized Ana. She recalled sitting on a couch at night talking to her Mom over the phone asking if she can come home. She stated, *‘Hindi ko ma-imagine na ganito ang gagawin ko dito. Sa atin, hindi kami talagang mayaman, pero hindi naman ko feel na parang mas maliit ako compared sa ibang tao.’* (‘I can’t imagine that this what I am going to end up doing here. At home [in the Philippines] we are not rich, but I didn’t feel less of a person compared to other people.’) Hearing her words brings out so many emotions in me.” –LA student, CC

“My experiences with the workers has reinforced and galvanized my desire and passion for continuing my work with immigration social justice projects. The OHIP journey has catalyzed much reflection that will continue beyond this summer.” -LA student, JF

“Speaking with the workers and listening to their stories was the most rewarding part of this internship. Their stories of the challenges and obstacles of their occupation, their struggle and inability to receive proper compensation for workplace injury and their vulnerability against corporate businesses inspired and motivated me to finish my research and strive for significant results. Many housekeeper face difficulties that overshadow their needs and many times their voices are lost despite an attempt to be heard. This project provided me the opportunity to assist those who are unaware of the occupational hazards, those who are unable to receive proper compensation for workplace injury and for those who are attempting to create a better workplace environment. – LA student, JM

“As a doctoral candidate, my dissertation topic explores how workplace experiences shape migrant identity (considerate of U.S. race relations and social hierarchies) for an international workforce. The ability to be part of this project has provided me with an additional lens and vocabulary to speak about workplace experiences. In addition, as a graduate student, we do not often have the opportunity to complete a project within a short amount of time that also has an immediate impact. This project has in a sense reenergized my commitment and illustrated a life outside of graduate school where progress can be quickly actualized.” – LA student, SC

“This has been a tremendous growth opportunity for me, as I was enabled to carry out my vision (co-constructed with Sayil) of how this research might be enacted in concert with a governmental regulatory process and a labor advocacy campaign. Specifically, I was able to think of this research beyond the abstract, as a tool for advocacy with a tangible mechanism for

change. Perhaps this type of experience sounds minor, but in my experience, most academic research is carried out without any concern for practical use. The pragmatism of this research was refreshing.” – LA student, KE

“This internship has given me so many valuable opportunities, including developing surveys, conducting online researches, contacting people and attending Collaborative/regional meeting. During three weeks of outreaching, the most memorable moments besides conducting a survey were all the conversation with salon owners. They were extremely open, friendly and helpful. They had taught us all the things that cannot be taught in classrooms. They had opened up my mind and made me look at the beauty industry in the way that I never thought of before. It was clearly a perspective changing experience.” -SF student, LN