

Kimberly Huggins, MPH

Concentration in Community Health Sciences

What brought you to the field of Public Health?

When I was an undergraduate, I took a Public Health course that really resonated with me. Until then, I hadn't considered Public Health as means to achieve my professional goals, even though I was involved in sexual health research, as well as with a student organization that focused on educating the campus community on sexual health and empowerment. I realized that a graduate degree in Public Health was a great way to incorporate my love of sexual health education and community engagement into a meaningful future career.

Why was SUNY Downstate SPH the school for you?

SUNY Downstate is in the heart of my community. I live and work in Central Brooklyn as an adolescent health educator and thus Downstate is an ideal location for my graduate education. Most courses are offered after 5PM, and this flexibility is key in terms of completing a degree while maintaining a job. SUNY Downstate's focus on immigrant and urban health within my home community was extremely important to me. I knew as a Downstate SPH student, I could actively participate in public health efforts that have direct positive impact on MY community, which was highly meaningful to me. Coming from a private institution for my undergraduate studies, I saw the cost of SUNY Downstate as a comfortable relief.



What would you say to students considering studying public health at SUNY Downstate?

If you're looking for a public health program where the faculty cares about your individual professional growth and offers a rich curriculum and a wide range of field experiences, SUNY Downstate is the place for you! If you're a student that wants to be a part of a vast network of public health experts and medical professionals, SUNY Downstate is for you! Lastly, if you are a working professional that wants to pursue graduate studies concurrently, SUNY Downstate offers the sort of flexibility with scheduling and course times that is very hard to find in other institutions.

Could you tell us about your fieldwork?

My fieldwork was done working on two real-world prevention initiatives. Barbershop Talk with Brothers (BTWB), a collaboration between SUNY Downstate's School of Public Health and the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health, is a project that seeks to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and Prostate Cancer screening among men in the Brooklyn community. My role was to help with community engagement activities, to identify and recruit barbershops in Central Brooklyn, to help maintain enthusiasm for the program among barbers and enrolled participants, and to implement and evaluate culturally-tailored community health outreach programs and activities.

The second project, Ready To Respond, a collaboration between the Special Treatment and Research program and the Department of Family Medicine at SUNY Downstate Medical Center, seeks to integrate substance abuse and HIV screening, rapid HIV testing, and brief educational intervention into a primary care practice of culturally diverse adult patient population. With this project, I learned motivational interviewing, conducted recruitment and retention activities and quality assurance activities and implemented the HIV and substance use prevention intervention.

How has studying at SUNY Downstate prepared you for a career in Public Health?

Studying at SUNY Downstate not only prepared me for a career in Public Health, but it helped me to become a better, well-rounded health educator. I apply theories and information that I learned in the classroom directly into my practice. I am equipped and confident to engage in conversations regarding health inequities seen among various diverse groups. I am able to develop a graduate level of thought on various public health topics. Additionally, the unique courses at SUNY Downstate allowed me to further identify my own professional future goals. After completing my MPH, I will be pursuing a MSW and PhD in Human Sexuality with the goal of being a sexual health therapist, professor and intervention developer/ evaluator.