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Student in the DrPH Program

Concentration: Community Health Sciences

What is your current job? I am currently the Senior Manager for the Community Partnerships Department's Brooklyn/Queens division at Housing Works Healthcare. The work of my department merges community engagement and business development.

Under my leadership, my division performs community needs assessments and strategizes on how we can be of best service. We then plan, implement and evaluate programs. Some community needs are met by a simple action – such as sending shuttle buses to transport shelter residents to and from medical appointments. Other programs are more involved, and can include the development of presentations, health education material, campaigns and advocacy efforts. All of our work serves to meet the needs of our community and elevate our community's health.

How has SUNY Downstate School of Public Health helped you in your career path? Probably the most important skill I learned at the School was to become a careful listener. Of course, I gained important skills in program planning, implementation and evaluation. But my professors and mentors taught me to go into projects armed with my academic knowledge, yet ready to listen carefully to the priorities and opinions of community members. I always integrate community input into my intervention planning.

The School also taught me how to get the community to listen. As a public health professional, a large part of my job is giving presentations. I now realize that all of the class presentations required of me while I was an SPH student served as great preparation for my real-world public health work. Being able to translate complicated public health information to the lay person – for example, communicating the correlation between the rate of unemployed men and infant mortality rates - is an essential skill I gained at the SPH through my assignments and research projects.



What would you say to a potential student considering SUNY Downstate SPH for graduate school? I would tell potential students to go for it! I would also tell them to keep the following in mind once they've begun their studies: 1) Make sure to maintain a good rapport with your academic advisor so that you can work together to navigate any bumps along the road you may experience. When I was a student, the faculty and staff always went the extra mile for students, and I'm sure this will be the same case for any prospective student; 2) Have fun with it. Don't look at each assignment as simply a requirement for your degree. Instead, look at it as an opportunity for you to be the developer or evaluator of your very own program/project and put your all into it. Practice excellence

in the classroom so that those excellent habits can follow into your career.

What was your most influential moment as a public health student at SUNY Downstate?

When I was working as a patient recruiter for cancer clinical trials, I noticed that we were having difficulty with new accruals to trials. Although it was not part of my job description at the time, I carried out a community needs assessment and identified a number of practical barriers faced by potential subjects at the Downstate Medical Center and Kings County Hospital. I was able to identify recurring themes in these barriers, which I brought to the attention of the Principal Investigator of our research project. Thereafter, I made suggestions on how those barriers could be overcome. Funds were identified to test the suggestions, which proved to be successful in increasing accruals. The suggestions resulting from my work became part of our research project's standard protocol, and I was also afforded the opportunity to present our results to medical professionals at regional and national conferences.