Applied Practice (AP) Experience

Initial Conversation with a Potential Organization or Preceptor

You reached out to an organization to see if they have opportunities and they would like to discuss what kind of opportunities they have and they have some questions about the AP experience. But, now you are wondering...

What kind of information should I give them about the AP experience? What are some of the questions I should ask them to see if this opportunity is a good AP experience?

Understanding AP Experience Processes & Requirements

On the UIC SPH website there is a section that focuses on AP experience. You are encouraged to read the website and understand the AP experience requirements before you meet with them.

Organization/Preceptor Responsibilities

Someone at the organization must agree to be your mentor/preceptor. Preceptors should have an advanced degree in public health, be at a mid-management level or higher and have at least three years of experience in the field (post-master's degree). Individuals who have a related degree and/or the equivalent in terms of public health experience may also be appropriate preceptors. They are the primary supervisors and mentors of the students at the applied practice experience site. Often when you meet with an organization they will ask what the requirements and expectations are for the AP experience. There is a specific page for preceptors on the website where there is a document entitled “Roles and responsibilities of the students, UIC advisors, UIC staff and preceptors” that you can direct them to.

Competencies & Areas of Study

The projects or tasks you are completing during the AP experience should address general public health and concentration specific competencies. The goal of the AP experience is for students to be able to apply the skills and knowledge they are learning in the classroom in the real-world.

Research the Organization

Visit the organization’s website (if you have not already) and get extremely familiar with their work. Sometimes when you reach out to an organization they will already have a specific project in mind for a student, but sometimes organizations will have a list of various projects. So it is good to have a sense of their work, and how you envision yourself working with them. If they have multiple opportunities or willing to design the opportunity with you, I would also ask yourself these questions as you read through their website:

- What are 1-2 specific initiatives or areas of the organization’s work you feel passionate about?
- What kind of projects do you see yourself working on? If you were doing work that inspires you, what would a typical day look like if you worked there? Dream a little….
- How does their work tie into your overall career goals?

Possible Questions for an Organization/Potential Preceptor

- Do you have any projects in mind that you would like a student to help with? What are they?
- Have you worked with any students in the past? What kind of projects did they work on?
- Who would my supervisor/mentor be? What is their background? Management style?
- What is the expectation for how long the student would work with the organization? Is this flexible? Or do they need a student for a specific timeframe and certain amount of hours per day/week?
- What is the organization’s culture like?
- What is their favorite thing about working there?
- Would this position be paid or unpaid? Most of the opportunities are unpaid.
- What are the next steps?
Do they need to run this passed their supervisor or someone else before they can agree to taking on a student worker?

Are there any other organizational policies that need to be followed in order for you to work at this organization (relevant human resources paperwork, background check)? How long does it usually take (build that into your timeline)?

Do they have any questions about the AP requirements that you can’t answer at the moment and you need to get back to them? What are they?

Do you need to get back to them by a certain date of whether you want pursue the opportunity for your AP experience?

After Meeting/Next Steps

- I would encourage you to take a few minutes after the interview to reflect and jot some notes down.
  - What did they say that really resonated with you?
  - Do you think you would be happy working with this organization? Why or why not?
  - Do the projects they are proposing address public health competencies and/or helping you build your public health skills in general and/or skills related to your respective area of study (CHS, EPI, EOHS, HPA)?
- Meet with your AP Experience advisor to discuss the opportunity (if you have not already)
- Do we have a contract with this organization? (if not, build that process into your timeline because this process can take about 3-4 months)

*Each division has an AP Experience Advisor that has to approve the AP experience. So make sure you let the organization know that there is a AP advisor you are working with at UIC SPH, who has to approve the experience or project(s). You can email or meet with the AP advisor to see if they are ok with what you are planning on doing for your AP experience before you finalize any plans with an organization or preceptor.