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During my summer 2010 JRCOSTEP I built lasting relationships, provided outstanding public health service, and discovered the career path I intend on following. Like much of the general population, I didn't have a clear understanding of the role the US Public Health Service plays, and how it's integrated into various federal agencies. However, by the time my JRCOSTEP concluded I was well aware of the importance of the Indian Health Service agency and the vital responsibilities of Commissioned Corps officers throughout the nation.

I conducted my JRCOSTEP as an Industrial Hygienist/Environmental Health Officer at the Oklahoma City Area Office, and worked under the direction of an outstanding preceptor, CAPT Richard Turner. During my time I was given the opportunity to provide public health services in a variety of settings, with the majority being Native American health care facilities. X-ray surveys, nitrous oxide monitoring, implementation of infection control practices, policy and procedure review/authorship, and statistical analysis were just a few of the various tasks I participated in during my JRCOSTEP. In addition to daily work duties, I was also given the unique opportunity to participate in an event which epitomized what it is to be a Commissioned Corps officer. This opportunity consisted of working side by side with officers from all over the nation on a deployment training exercise in which we provided support for a Remote Area Medical event. This event was a free medical, vision, and dental clinic that provided care to more than 1,700 patients, with services totaling over a quarter of a million dollars in health care.

During my time with the USPHS I realized that not only were daily work duties diverse, but the added spontaneity of deployment opportunities create a fluid work dynamic unmatched by the private sector. These were just a few of the many unique characteristics afforded by the Commissioned Corps that, I believe, would be difficult to find in other work environments.

Based on my experience, I would highly recommend all public health students consider the USPHS when seeking internship opportunities. During my summer I had the chance to interact with many Commissioned Corps officers and all reiterated the same sentiment, which was they couldn't imagine not being part of the USPHS. After my JRCOSTEP I couldn't imagine pursuing a career in anything other than the USPHS.