

Serena Xiong '13

Project: The Hmong and Hispanic Household Radon Reduction Project

1. Please describe your plan for your project.

For my summer project, I am working on a public health intervention that will promote awareness of Radon and its health risks in Hmong and Hispanic homeowners living in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota. The project will involve the following four goals:

1. To better educate Hmong and Hispanic families about Radon and how it may lead to lung cancer.
2. To help distribute Radon test kits, Radon testing vouchers and coupons to these families, and help them test their homes for Radon.
3. To educate these families living in Radon affected homes about the available financial resources for affording a home repair or mitigation.
4. And, to promote smoking cessation in smokers living in Radon affected homes.

The public health intervention is a joint project between the Minnesota Department of Health's Indoor Air Unit and Hmong and Latino community organizations to develop a curriculum for community health workers to lead Radon health education classes. The project will last three months long during the duration of the summer.

2. What was the application process like? What steps did you take to develop your project and apply for this opportunity?

The most daunting component about the application was the seven page project proposal. Organizing a community service project that would be meaningful, effective, and sustainable in a community was no easy feat. For this portion of the application, I spent a good four weeks on developing an idea and plan of actions for my project.

In terms of developing an idea for my project, it sort of came intuitively to me. I've always had a passion for Public Health, so I knew I wanted to create a project that was health-driven. I also grew up in a marginalized refugee community that I knew needed a lot of early prevention intervention on health education. So it didn't take long for me to put these two components together and start developing my project. The majority of my time was spent on revising my project plan. **My main recommendation for this project development stage is to strive to create a project that is driven primarily by personal experiences - it will make the application so much easier.**

3. How did you utilize the CEL or other resources?

A week before the deadline, I went to the CEL and met with Nate Jacobi to revise it. The whole revision process was really helpful; it allowed me a chance to really flesh out my ideas and make them more feasible. After my application passed onto the statewide review, I was given a chance to look at how the past scholars from St. Olaf crafted their own applications. This gave me quite an advantage, because it gave me some skills in further crafting my application into a

more competitive one. So, **I definitely encourage a lot of CEL visits. Nate Jacobi was super helpful in the whole process.** He was really my go-to person and consultant throughout the application process. Again, I cannot stress it enough, but do utilize the CEL staff - have them review your resume/CV and definitely have at least one person to review your proposal/application before you turn it in; it will make all the difference if your application appears neat, error-less, and well-prepared.

4. What do you hope to learn or gain from this experience?

The Phillips Scholarship is a huge service opportunity for me to make a sustainable difference in how public health interventions are being delivered. Through my project, I really hope that public health officials will place a greater emphasis on creating culturally sensitive interventions in marginalized, linguistically-challenged communities. For so long, these communities have continued to experience health inequalities because there is an unequal distribution of intervention efforts to their communities; thus, I hope that I can change that dynamic through my service. I am also hoping to gain a skillset for building community capacity. I strongly believe that when marginalized communities are given the skills to deal with their own inequality issues, their efforts are so much more sustainable than if they were being regulated by an external subject.