Getting the Most Out of the APHA Conference

Attending the American Public Health Association (APHA) Conference in the Fall can be an exciting and valuable professional activity for students. Over 700 organizations, schools and companies related to the public health field are represented in information sessions, receptions and at the conference exhibition hall. There is a wealth of information and networking opportunities of which to take advantage in a short three day period of time. You might imagine, therefore, that the conference can be a daunting experience. But a few simple preparations and tips can make your trip less overwhelming.

First, know that the conference is not usually a venue to find or secure a post-graduate position. There are too many activities for most organizations at APHA to focus on hiring. Instead, you can view the conference as an outstanding networking opportunity to be able to meet and talk to many types of professionals in diverse public health fields and gain tips and perspectives, including potential job leads. Some employers do participate in interviews at the Career Mart, but not only provide information at the exposition. You can search the list of attendees on the APHA website under “About Careers” and also email your resume to a conference binder at careers@apha.org.

Since many employers do not interview at the fair, do spend a significant amount of time visiting the booths at the exhibit hall, even organizing ahead of time which ones are a priority, what specific questions you could prepare for each, and how you will introduce yourself in a short 15 second introduction stating your name, institution and program of study. Even if you are talking with representatives at the booths who are not directly related to the work in which you are interested, ask for contact names of their colleagues that are in your area of interest, collect business cards and employer literature, and if a conversation goes well, offer your resume. Don’t forget to attend conference sessions on topics in your field as well, in order to meet the panelists to network.

Dress for success in conservative professional attire carrying a portfolio to organize all of your items. You can make your own business cards to exchange with contacts using the Tulane template which is found on the Career Services main webpage. Don’t forget to follow-up after the conference with emails to all of the new people you met. You can reiterate your interest, thank them for their time and even attach your resume. And don’t miss Tulane SPHTM’s networking reception on Monday night of the conference.

Alumni Profile: Kevin Horton

Kevin Horton graduated from Tulane University’s School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine in 1996 with an MSPH in Environmental Health, specializing in Water Quality Management. After graduating, he initially moved to Columbus, Ohio to work for a waste management company, but it was soon bought out. So, he began working for the Ohio Department of Health as an epidemiologist, focusing on chronic and infectious diseases. After 3 years, Kevin moved back home to Atlanta, Georgia and worked as an epidemiologist for the CDC under the ATSDR (Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry). He earned his DrPH in Environmental Health at the University of Georgia while working for the CDC. Upon receiving his doctorate in 2010, he became the Chief of the Environmental Health Surveillance Branch within the Division of Toxicology and Human Health Sciences at ATSDR. He oversees about 25 people, ranging from epidemiologists to IT personnel and biostatisticians. Some of his current projects include the National ALS Registry, the National Toxic Substance Incidents Program, and the health investigation of asbestos-contaminated vermiculite in Libby, Montana.

His advice to SPHTM students is to start early on the job search and to look often. He also suggests do not overlook local and state jobs; his work with the Ohio Department of Health gave him helpful and unique perspectives before entering his position with the CDC.

WE LOVE TO KNOW WHERE OUR ALUMNI ARE IN THE WORLD!

* Join Us on LinkedIn - Connect and network throughout your careers! Tulane SPHTM Career Services has a private group on LinkedIn to share information, resources and profiles for alumni and students. Over 800 and growing!!

* The Tulane University Online Community is a university-wide online alumni database that allows students to connect with all alumni who have registered their information about their locations and employers.