

Division of Public Health team awarded a Global Learning Across the Disciplines (GLAD) Award

Scott Benson, PhD, MD, MPH, along with Jim VanDerslice, PhD; Tejinder P. Singh, BDS, MDS, MPH; and Sharon Talboys, PhD, MPH were awarded a Global Learning Across the Disciplines (GLAD) Award from the University of Utah (UU) Office of Global Engagement. The award is designed to support efforts to integrate multi-disciplinary global learning into curricular activities.

This \$10,000 award will support the development of a “WASH Academy” to promote education, practical training, and research in the area of Water, Sanitation, and Health (WASH). Dr. Benson’s team envisioned the Academy to be the focal point for an experiential learning program that integrates West African WASH practitioners from government, NGOs, and villages, with UU undergraduate and graduate students for a week long ‘boot camp’ at the Ensign College of Public Health Campus located in Ghana. The ‘boot camp’ will include a mixed group of participants from government agencies, funders, NGOs, village water boards, and UU faculty and students from disparate disciplines such as behavioral sciences, public policy, economics, engineering, and public health.

Technical skills will be developed through experiential learning in a ‘WASH Park,’ a living laboratory where various water treatments, distribution, and sanitation technologies are built and tested to provide hands-on training in construction, operation, and maintenance. Examples of different water and sanitation technologies will help participants learn how to build, maintain, and repair water pumps and conduct assessments and water quality analyses. The ‘WASH Park’ will also serve as a research platform to assess the sustainability and performance of new technologies and innovations to existing designs. Dr. Benson envisions an environment where participants become a learning community and develop lasting personal connections.

The WASH Academy is part of a larger multidisciplinary effort to develop graduate education focused on the crosscutting themes that define the relationship between health, clean drinking water, proper sanitation, and hygiene behaviors. Two new courses focusing on these issues will serve as the cornerstone of a new graduate certificate in WASH Sciences. The certificate will be designed to integrate didactic learning in the US with the WASH Academy in Ghana. UU students will earn course credits for participating in the Academy’s ‘boot camp’ and will have the opportunity to apply their skills to a WASH project in Ghana as part of the Division of Public Health Learning Abroad program.

The first activity of the WASH Academy will be a planning meeting to include stakeholders from communities, NGOs, academia, service providers, and government agencies to map out the Academy’s mission and activities. The planning meeting will be held in conjunction with the launch of the University of Utah Public Health MPH Program at the Ensign Global Campus in Ghana, Africa in August 2018.

Kristen Steiner
Public Relations Associate
801.581.5321