

TITLE: Workforce Development is a COVID-19 Silver Lining: Oregon State University (OSU) Students are Helping Advance the Public Health Workforce Through an Academic Health Department Partnership with Oregon Health Authority

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STUDENT SUBMISSION: No

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Those interested in academic health departments, workforce development and COVID-19 response initiatives

ABSTRACT: Background: Oregon's state and local public health authorities were not sufficiently staffed to conduct contact tracing and case investigation at the onset of the pandemic. Through an intergovernmental agreement between the Oregon Health Authority and OSU College of Public Health and Human Sciences, OSU graduate and undergraduate students formed a Surge Bench to support COVID-19 response. Purpose: We will describe content of >90-hours of student preparatory training and discuss integration into state and LPHA response activities. We will also outline how the Surge Bench impacted students' preparation to enter the public health workforce. Methods: Training includes 10 modules on topics covering epidemiological investigations, health disparities, and case investigation/data entry. Students completed competency self-assessments before and after training, and annually. Self-assessments evaluated knowledge and confidence of academic degree competencies and COVID-19 response activities. Results: Twenty-seven Surge Bench students were deployed to 22 different counties in Oregon since August 2020. In Year 1, pre (N=21) and post (N=19) self-assessments showed a significant increase in knowledge and confidence to conduct COVID-19 response strategies among all students; graduate students in particular reported gains in academic competencies. Implications: Through this academic health partnership, OSU students are gaining meaningful, professional experience to be workforce ready.

OBJECTIVE(S): 1) Discuss student learning and growth in academic competencies as a result of working on the Surge Bench. 2) Explain key components of training and support used for the Surge Bench.
