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My COSTEP experience has been an amazing opportunity. I am currently a senior at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. I will be graduating in June 2008 with a Bachelors of Science in Environmental Health. I had a unique setup for my COSTEP considering I was accepted to come in the spring rather than the summer. The last requirement I have to complete my degree is this COSTEP.

The first I learned about the U.S. Public Health Service was my junior year sitting in an environmental health course. There was a presentation given by five Commissioned Officers about opportunities and job details the Public Health Service offered. I was immediately interested in the Public Health Service. I soon switched my major to environmental health. A year later, I received an e-mail telling all students there was a visitor coming to campus who would be willing to meet with students about COSTEP opportunities. I quickly responded to that email and met with Carrie Oyster the following Friday. She helped me a great deal through the application process and also in finding me a location that would accept me during spring quarter. Without her help, I would never have had this wonderful experience.

The COSTEP program offers students an opportunity to travel to remote locations, get hands-on experience, try new things, and work with unique populations. Every COSTEP experience is different, but all valuable in beginning a career in public.

I was assigned to Anchorage, Alaska working under LCDR Troy Ritter. After traveling 4,000 miles from my very familiar college town to a new city and state, I was thrilled for the experience I was about to encounter for the next few months. I immediately grew to love the area, full of outdoor activities and wildlife. I was welcomed by everyone in the office almost instantly. I worked for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium in the Division of Environmental Health and Engineering.

The best thing about the COSTEP was traveling to villages throughout the state. I got the opportunity to travel to Akiak, Goodnews Bay, Bethel, Nunam Iqua, Deering, and Kotzebue, all which were different in their own way. Going to the villages was a very interesting experience by getting to know what their native culture is like. The majority of my time in the villages was spent helping with a water sanitation project. The water sanitation project is trying to show that there is a direct link between having running

water in homes and a reduction in disease spread. While in the villages I enrolled families in this study and helped them understand what the project was all about. I really enjoyed walking to homes and meeting the natives in their own environment. It was eye opening to see the way some of the villages pack their water from rivers and the water point for basic survival. I also worked on several things in the office including Consumer Confidence Reports, a COSTEP and fluoride webpage, and learning about water treatment.

I would say that the most rewarding aspect of the COSTEP was getting to experience such a unique location and working with the natives of Alaska who I knew little about prior to coming to Alaska. I would highly recommend a COSTEP for anyone interested in the U.S. Public Health Service. The COSTEP program gives a great preparation for a future career in public health. I think the COSTEP program is the most diverse, exciting, and educational internship out there. It has definitely given me a once in a lifetime experience that I will never forget. Everyone has been a huge help and made my experience exceptional. My COSTEP opportunity would not have been possible if it were not for the people in the DEHE office at Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, especially Troy Ritter and Jeff Smith.