Indira D'Souza 0:19
Okay, so hello everyone! Welcome to Episode Five of the Global Disease Biology Pacticum Pods. In this podcast series we will be talking Practicum Projects with current and former GDB students. All students in the major are required to complete a practicum project before graduation. This project involves students finding a faculty mentor, conducting research under the mentor's guidance and turning their research experiences into a publishable scientific manuscript. Tune in to Practicum Pods to learn more about research mentors and the GDB Practicum experience.

Welcome to

the pod so I'm your host GDB Peer Advisor. My name is Indira. Today I'm joined on the show by the lovely Vanshika. Vanshika is a current senior and their practicum title is Mental Health in Rural Communities. So hi, Vanshika, how are you doing? It's great to have you on the Pod today.

Vanshika 1:32
Hi, I'm good. How are you?

Indira D'Souza 1:35
I'm doing well. I'm really liking this spring weather. So the first question that I have for you is, could you tell us a little bit more about yourself, and also what topic your Practicum Project is on, and maybe why this topic interests you?

Vanshika 1:52
Sure, so my name is Vanshika. I am a senior Global Disease Biology major, obviously. So I'm here. And I am from the South Bay. It's like near San Francisco, but like an hour south. And I got really interested in the Global Disease Biology major because of how interdisciplinary it was, I liked that we got to get all of the science, education and you know, take biology and chemistry and all of those courses. But there was also this emphasis placed on the importance of learning how to apply that in policy and public health. So I really like that. And in terms of my topic, so my Practicum Project is on mental health in rural communities. This topic really interests me, primarily because of what we learn in Global Disease Biology, but also just from my experience, volunteering at a few mental health or student run clinics. And so one was a mental health clinic and the other one was Knight's Landing One Health Center. So the women's mental health clinic was called Connected. And it's a mental health clinic in downtown Sacramento that treats women with postpartum depression and anxiety. So I learned a lot about the complexities of mental health, how widespread it can be, and just the variety of mental health issues that exist. And then through my experience, in Knight's Landing One Health Center I, you know, learned about the reality that rural communities face when it comes to access to health care, especially when it comes to mental health care because of how you know how stigmatized it is and thankfully that

stigma has slowly been getting lifted, especially given that issues like anxiety and depression. And, you know, the wide spectrum of disorders: DD VPD, PMDD are all being brought to light more, honestly, because of COVID, too. I think it's been helpful. Yeah.

Indira D'Souza 4:04
Yeah. Awesome. So great to hear about all your connections with student-run clinics and stuff. So my next question for you is, how did you find your practicum mentor? So what resources helped you the most as you searched for a faculty mentor and kind of how did you conduct the process?

Vanshika 4:25
Yeah, um, so I don't know if you've spoken to people who've been finding their mentor, like this year, but I feel like this process was pretty stressful for me personally. I actually had two previous mentors before I found my third. So like, the first fell through because it was an in person lab and then COVID started and so obviously, everything was remote. And then the second person had to, like they didn't have the time any like, we have emails and then they didn't have the time. So because of COVID they had to focus their efforts on that. And so the third one was a charm, and I love the relationship that I have with my research mentors. And my advice, so this is I feel like people may have already emphasized this, but a ton of emails, I'd make an Excel spreadsheet and also use the label feature on Gmail to keep track of everything. And there's also this option on Gmail, specifically that I know but I'm sure it's in other emails too. But you can schedule send. So I would like maybe use schedule send to circle back to people after an appropriate amount of time and stuff. So that way, like, takes off the mental load for you to be like, "Oh, this person didn't respond. Yeah. Did they respond?" you know, so like, because you know,PI's and professors are so busy and swamped, so you should, you know, always circle back. But also like, if they do respond, make sure you remove that schedule send because that would be like, that would not the ideal. And I think the class is, Dr. Sarah Dye really helped me. Honestly, it gave me the motivation and the deadline finding a mentor seriously, because you can pull it off, because you're going to be taking all these other hard classes. And so put a fire to, you know, get moving on it. And the last one would be like LinkedIn, I something I did when I was desperate was to go on LinkedIn and research and reach out to alumni from UC Davis. And actually, that's howI found my first mentor, because she was like, "Oh, yeah, I think our lab is actually hiring right now." And so that's like another idea.

Indira D'Souza 6:41
Yeah, cool.

I really like your use of Schedule Send to follow up with professors after you email them. That's, that's a good feature to highlight. So moving on to our next question. Yeah. So what type of research did or do you currently engage in? Was it virtual? Or did you have an in person aspect?

Was it observational or experimental? Just kind of outline for us what a typical research shift would look like for you.

Vanshika 7:11
Okay, yeah, mine was fully virtual and and essentially, what we're doing is looking at what mental and emotional health programs would be possible to implement in rural communities, and specifically, the community that I'm focusing is on focusing on is Knight's Landing, because that's the community that my clinic serves and Knight's Landing is 20 minutes north of Woodland, and it serves the migrant farming community of Knight's Landing. And we're just looking into what are some barriers that not only the community faced in access to healthcare, but also that providers face in coming to Knight's Landing in the first place? So like, why government and private services aren't there? Like why, you know, federal, Federally Qualified services aren't there. So the first part is definitely like literature review, reviewing best practices, seeing what other communities are doing. And then transcripts from interviews and, and surveys that a previous student, I think he's graduating, or he already graduated last year, but now he's doing his Master's, and he had conducted interviews, but they haven't been like, coded yet. So I'm working on that as well. And then the last one is, step of it is conducting surveys with mental health professionals and programs. And just getting more data on you know, why they haven't been able to establish a proper, you know, source of care in Knight's Landing.

Indira D'Souza 8:53
Yeah, okay. So it sounds like, kind of started with a literature review, and then moved into more analyzing data, and collecting data from other students and from your own surveys and stuff. Is that is that kind of a summary?

Vanshika 9:07
Yeah, yeah.

Indira D'Souza 9:09
Perfect. Okay, awesome.

So um, last question before we move on to our optional, or third section. So what is your relationship with your mentor? Like, I know, you mentioned that you really enjoy your relationship with them. So I'm wondering if you can elaborate on that and tell us, do you meet with them regularly? Or do you work with other grad students? Or just in general, How hands on is your mentor?

Vanshika 9:38
Yes, so my official mentor is Dr. Judy Van der Water and then my other mentor, so I have two mentors, but my official one is Judy and then my primary one is Sarina Rodriguez. And I meet

with them on a pretty regular basis, at least weekly or bi weekly. And I really like it. The relationship that we have, I feel like they are so helpful. And they really have a passion and like teaching students to, you know, the research process. And I feel like they, they have so much on their plates. I know they both are so busy with their jobs, but they genuinely take the time out of their day to help me. And I just find that so cool that, you know, they are taking time out of their day to like, provide me with Help and Resources. And so, yeah, I think they're pretty hands on. And it's all virtual. And we meet like, once, once a week, once every two weeks.

Indira D'Souza 10:41
Cool. And then at those meetings, do you bring up questions to them, or do they give you tasks? or What does that meeting look like?

Vanshika 10:49
Yes, so we have like a shared Google Drive. And we have like, a bunch of documents on there. So depending on what the goal of the meeting is, we'll like just go from there. So just depends.

Indira D'Souza 11:06
Yeah, awesome. Okay. So moving into our third section, we have three questions that we pick from when we interview each student. So the question that we picked today is, what skills Did you acquire during your research experience that might be useful in your future goals?

Vanshika 11:28
Um, so for skills, I would definitely say, communication skills, surprisingly, given, that everything is virtual. I think in a lot of the phone and Zoom interviews that I've been conducting with professionals in the field, I am getting a lot better at getting straight to the point and being cognizant of people's time. Because these are all busy professionals, and like, I'm an undergraduate conducting research for my senior thesis. So like, they're definitely doing me a favor. And so just being like, straight to the point and finding ways to make people personally interested and more willing to volunteer their time, by I guess, identifying areas in which they can personally connect to my research. So yeah, I think communication and like personable like skills, for sure.

Indira D'Souza 12:22
Yeah, especially in the virtual environment, it can be kind of hard to create those connections. So it's super cool that you're learning how to do that

through your project.

Vanshika 12:30
Yeah.

Indira D'Souza 12:34

Okay, so thank you so much, Vanshika for chatting with us about your GDB Practicum experience. Our students are so excited to hear about these projects and learn how to approach research in the large university setting. So students, you can visit gdb.uc davis.edu to access the rest of the podcasts in this series, or you can find us on Spotify. If you like listening to practicum pods and have suggestions for future topics for the pod, please let the gdb advising staff know at gdb-advise@ucdavis.edu Thanks everyone and have a great week. Thank you Vanshika.

Vanshika 13:16

Thank you. Good luck to everybody.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai