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Sasakawa Nursing Fellow 2023 Progress Report

1. Purpose and Overview

This report summarizes my academic and personal progress as a Sasakawa Nursing Fellow at Columbia University from September 2023 to March 2024. My background as a public health nurse in Tokyo has driven my pursuit of advanced data-analysis skills to inform evidence-based policy development. I am currently a first-year Master's student majoring in Epidemiology with a Comparative Effectiveness Outcome Research certificate.

2. Academic Aspect

My first year at Columbia University has been pivotal in honing my skills as a public health professional. In the first semester, my cohort of approximately 450 students followed a comprehensive curriculum covering 7 broad areas of study and 16 subjects. One of the standout classes for me was "Research Methods and Applications", where I gained essential research skills encompassing quantitative and qualitative measurement, data collection methods, epidemiologic study design, and statistical inference. Despite initial concerns about my quantitative research knowledge, the well-structured nature of the course, with video and live lectures, lab activities, and homework, enabled me to grasp the fundamentals effectively.

I encountered challenges in writing essays and participating in discussions. Weekly essay assignments on topics such as the impact of global warming on public health and a policy memo addressing approaches for preventing gun violence required extensive research and writing time. Additionally, certain topics, including Ethics and the History of the United States in the Foundations of Public Health course, posed challenges for participating in discussions due to my limited background knowledge. To overcome these barriers, I sought assistance from Teaching Assistants (TAs) and the student office. Confiding in my TA about my confusion allowed them to provide valuable guidance on discussion and essay writing and clarify lecture contents. Additionally, the student office offered a writing support program, which significantly improved my grammar skills in essay assignments. These supports were instrumental in enhancing my writing and discussion participation skills.

Reflecting on my first semester, I've learned the importance of seeking assistance. The accessibility of support systems at Columbia encourages proactive engagement, reinforcing my commitment to seek help when needed in the upcoming semester.

During the second semester, I delved into more detailed subjects aligned with my interests. I decided to pursue the "Comparative Effectiveness Outcome Research" certificate, which focuses on decision analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis in healthcare and public health domains. Learning about decision analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis provided me with new perspectives on comparing benefits and harms to make decisions aimed at improving healthcare with limited resources.

Furthermore, I expanded my knowledge beyond my main area of interest outside of coursework. I took on the role of vice president in a student club, focusing on increasing awareness of food policy and food justice issues. I will be planning events and establishing connections with local businesses to serve the local community. Additionally, I attended various events outside of the Mailman School, including those at the Business School and the School of International and Public Affairs. These experiences taught me how to collaborate with other sectors to promote public health. One of the benefits of attending a large institution like Columbia, with multiple areas of study, is the opportunity to learn about public health not just through coursework, but also through such events and cross-sectional networking.

My experience at Columbia has been enriching, particularly in expanding my understanding of public health. While the workload was tough in the first semester, I learned to manage my time better in the second semester and enjoyed studying public health from different angles. In the upcoming semester, I plan to expand my knowledge by exploring new subjects that were not covered in my bachelor's program. I also intend to seek more opportunities to develop my leadership skills in the field of public health.

3. Living Aspect

Living in NYC has exposed me to the city's ongoing struggle with pronounced racial and socio-economic segregation, despite its liberal political stance. Communities of color often face financial hardships, higher crime rates, limited educational opportunities, and inadequate access to healthcare. This disparity is evident not just from data but also from my observations in these neighborhoods. For example, I've noticed that communities of color have far fewer grocery stores offering healthy food options and pharmacies with a variety of medical supplies. Living in this diverse city has made me reflect deeply on the history and political dynamics in the United States underlying such disparities.

The Mailman School of Public Health is situated in Washington Heights, the northern part of Manhattan. The racial makeup of the neighborhood is 64.1% Hispanic, 21.7% White, 7.5% Black, and 3.5% Asian residents (City of New York, 2020). Washington Heights is known as "Little Dominican Republic," reflecting one of the largest Dominican communities globally. The neighborhood is adorned with Dominican restaurants and shops, providing a rich Hispanic cultural atmosphere.

NYC's status as a global hub for many large companies has provided numerous career opportunities in public health. Columbia has facilitated access to these opportunities through career fairs and networking events with private companies, non-profits, and government agencies. Attending these events, such as those hosted by pharmaceutical and

consulting companies, has inspired me to seek a career in an innovative and challenging environment.

My time in NYC has not only exposed me to rich career opportunities but has also provided me with invaluable insights into disparities, making it one of the best places in the world to learn about public health from a holistic perspective.

4. Acknowledgment

I am deeply grateful to the Sasakawa Health Foundation for the generous scholarship that has provided me with this invaluable experience at Columbia University. Thanks to their continuous support, I have been able to dedicate myself fully to my studies. In my interactions with many international students at Columbia, I have not encountered such a generous and advanced scholarship elsewhere. I am committed to working even harder to contribute to Japanese society by integrating my studies and nursing skills after graduation.

5. Reference

New York City Department of City Planning. (n.d.). Population FactFinder. <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/explorer/selection/4ba28aabe2d983a4b7e9fa5c165c2ce00b7a5c36?source=decennial-change>