

Luna, Elena
Application for the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship

Dear Selection Committee,

It gives me great pleasure to submit my application to be reviewed for the ‘Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship.’ In my essay prompt, I will discuss my previous and current activities related to health education/promotion; professional goals; and current and future activities related to youth health.

Previous and current activities related to health education/ promotion

Past activities related to health education/ promotion including teaching and research work. I have been a previous Teaching Assistant (TA) for *Introduction to Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences* (Fall 202 and Spring 2021) and *Intervention Mapping* – a framework for developing, implementing, and evaluating health promotion programs (Summer 2020/2021).

I also have research experience in health education and health promotion. For example, I was the Principal Investigator for three independent studies. *Evaluation of Green School Yard Project* (2019), *Evaluation Plan of Action for Austin Parks Foundation* (2020), and *Park Use, Health, and Needs of Park Users During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (2021). The three projects were aimed at evaluating the park programming as it related to child and adult health. I also have research and professional experience as a Health Coach, where I provided health and wellness coaching for patients at a low-income clinic in Fort Worth, TX (2018).

Current activities related to health education/ promotion also including teaching, research, and my appointment with the American Evaluation Association (AEA).

I am fortunate enough to still be a TA for Intervention Mapping (Fall 2021, Winter 2021, and Spring 2022). What I like most about being a TA for IM is the time that I get to spend providing feedback to students and learning how I can be more efficient at transferring knowledge to them. In terms of research, my dissertation is focused on understanding barriers and facilitators for physical activity among Latinos in Travis County, TX. What I like about my research studies is that I am grounding the research in Community-based participatory methods, where I can *colearn* with the Latino community in Travis County to understand their experience with physical activity. In doing so, not only am I able to share information about health promotion/ health education, but I am also learning health promotions strategies from them. In my role at the AEA, I am a Graduate Education Diversity Intern (GEDI) for the 2021 – 2022 school year. The GEDI program - a cohort-based experience and training opportunity for groups of students from traditionally under-represented groups in the field of evaluation. The GEDI

program aims to expand the pool of graduate students of color, stimulate evaluative thinking in under-representative communities, and deepen the profession's capacity to work in racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse settings. As part of my internships, I am working with a health foundation in California to lead an evaluation of a health coalition that is working to increase vaccine uptake and healthy equity in their region.

Professional goals in health education and promotion

My pursuit of a doctorate in Public Health in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences has always been focused on my long-term goal of becoming a Public Health leader. Effective leadership in Public Health requires us to consider the social determinants of health, in addition to the biological determinants. Evidence has repeatedly shown us that social determinants of health are the real drivers of the health disparities that we see today. For that reason, my doctoral program has taught me how to develop evidence-based interventions, how to implement them, and how to evaluate them, while simultaneously learning how to engage community members at each stage of the process. For those reasons, I aspire to become a leading researcher at an academic institution and mentor/teacher to first-generation students.

In the short term, I aim to apply to future post-doctoral programs that are focused on Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and Community-engaged research. This is important to me because my dissertation uses similar processes. For example, one of my dissertation studies focuses on understanding older Latinos' individual and environmental reasons for engaging, or not engaging, in physical activity. For my second dissertation study, I am working to conduct 5 participatory workshops with youth. During the participatory workshops, youth will engage with me as *co-investigators* in a series of organized topics related to healthy living within their community. Topics include geospatial mapping of existing physical activity assets, future vision mapping, and qualitative analysis. In the final workshop, youth will share their research findings with a panel of community health and public health representatives, with the goal of advocating for change in their community.

Future activities are likely to advance the health of children and youth

An example of a current activity that is likely to advance the health of youth is the *Youth Advocates for Change* workshops, which is part of my dissertation research. I am partnering with students from a local high school in Travis County, Texas to be 'co-investigators' with me and assist me in understand healthy living in their community. I intentionally developed the

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workshops, using the Parallel Track Model – a health promotion model that focus on community empowerment and health promotion program design. By partnering with youth as *co-investigators*, their health will be advanced through workshop knowledge generation about community health promotion and the development of their research and leadership skills, which will prepare them to solve future community-health problems. For my future work, I am seeking to expand on my doctoral work by applying to postdoctoral fellowship that have a strong emphasis around Youth Participatory Action Research and Community-engaged Research.

In conclusion, I do feel that this application highlights my commitment to the field of health promotion/education. As part of my previous and current activities related to health education/promotion, I have been able to be a Teaching Assistant for *Introduction to Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences and Intervention Mapping* for seven semesters (past and future). I have also been able to lead multiple independent studies as a student, including the *Evaluation of Green School Yard Project (2019)*, the *Evaluation Plan of Action for Austin Parks Foundation (2020)*, and *Park Use, Health, and Needs of Park Users During the COVID-19 Pandemic (2021)*. My professional goals in health promotion/education include becoming a leading researcher at an academic institution and mentor/teacher to first-generation students and continuing to build on my skills related to Youth Participatory Action Research. I appreciate the committees' time and attention and will look forward to future scholarship opportunities.

Thanks!

-Elena Luna.