

Personal Essay - The Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to apply for the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship offered by the Foundation for the Advancement of Health Education. I am currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Public Health at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), and I am eager to contribute my skills and passion for public health to the betterment of children and youth.

My journey toward public health began with a personal tragedy that reshaped my life. Losing my father at a young age led me to investigate the devastating impact of diseases, particularly cancer, on families. Driven to make a meaningful difference, I pursued a path in nuclear medical science, eventually transitioning to public health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In my current role as a Ph.D. student, I have actively engaged in research that addresses critical health issues affecting young populations. My focus on problem gambling among college students stems from its alarming prevalence here in Las Vegas and the severe consequences it poses to individuals and society. It is of particular significance for college students. The prevalence of problem gambling, defined as behavior jeopardizing personal, familial, or professional aspects, is three times higher among college students than the general population. While the general population's estimated problem gambling rate is around 3%, it rises to 10.23% for college students.

I am particularly proud of the successful grant applications I led, securing funding for research projects that delve into the intersection of health behavior change theories and real-world challenges college students face. I secured funding for two grants, from the Nevada Council on Problem Gambling and the UNLV International Gaming Institute, totaling \$9,000 each. These grants have enabled me to lead projects such as "A phenomenological qualitative study based on the MTM of health behavior change to identify factors and ways to design interventions for quitting gambling among older adults" and "Explaining the correlates of problem gambling behavior based on the MTM of health behavior change among college students: A cross-sectional study."

The success of these projects has not only resulted in valuable insights into gambling behaviors but has also led to impactful publications. I am the first author of an article titled "Examining the Gambling Behavior of University Students: A Cross-Sectional Survey Applying the Multi-Theory Model (MTM) of Health Behavior Change in a Single Institution," published in the Journal of Healthcare. This study was presented at the 16th Annual Nevada State Conference on Problem Gambling and the 2023 Nevada Public Health Association Annual Meeting.

Furthermore, I have participated in a commentary titled "Possible role of multi-theory model (MTM) of health behavior change in designing substance use prevention and treatment interventions," which is currently under review for publication. This study holds great promise to counter substance abuse, which is a growing issue locally and internationally. Another study, "Temporal variations in and predictive values of ABG results before in-hospital cardiac arrest," is also under review. Moreover, there are two additional manuscripts under review for publication. One is titled "Theory-based antecedents of breastfeeding among pregnant women in the United

States," uncovering that the implementation of targeted interventions could positively impact breastfeeding rates, resulting in enhanced health outcomes and developmental advantages for children. The second manuscript, titled "Explaining the correlates of eating outside-of-home (EOH) behavior in a nationally representative US sample using the MTM of health behavior change: A cross-sectional study," offers valuable insights for health education and promotion efforts. These insights enable the development of targeted strategies to promote healthier dietary choices and lifestyles.

I am currently working on several studies besides my dissertation. A project titled "Theory-based determinants of stopping drowsy driving behavior in college students: A cross-sectional study" is currently in the data analysis phase. This research holds promise for enhancing the well-being of youth, providing valuable insights that can inform targeted interventions to mitigate drowsy driving risks and promote safer behaviors among college students. Another study titled "Yoga for osteoarthritis: Current state of interventions" presented at the 2023 American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Expo in Atlanta, Georgia, not only contributes valuable insights to the field of osteoarthritis management but also provides a foundation for enhancing health education and promotion efforts. I am currently working on a manuscript titled "Utilization of the MTM of health behavior change to explain or change health behaviors: A scoping review." This research endeavor not only aims to advance our understanding of health behavior change but also holds the potential to significantly contribute to the field of health education and promotion, offering valuable insights that can inform and improve interventions for fostering positive health behaviors. Additionally, I am in the early stages of planning future projects with working titles including "Role of Acupuncture for Migraine," "Effects of Yoga for Treatment and Prevention of Migraine," and "Potential Applications of Yoga for Alzheimer's". These endeavors not only promise to contribute valuable insights to the respective fields but also hold the potential to inform and enhance health education and promotion strategies. Furthermore, with a focus on topics relevant to youth, these projects aim to address health concerns and promote well-being among younger populations through evidence-based interventions. In recognition of my contributions to the field of Public Health, I was recently inducted into the prestigious Delta Omega Public Health Honorary Society.

In addition to my research endeavors, I have had the privilege of serving as the acting student body president and vice president of the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) during the challenging times of the pandemic. In these leadership roles, I gained firsthand experience in understanding the psychological stress and hardships our students face. Responding to their needs, I initiated an emergency funding program by reallocating GPSA funds to aid students needing financial assistance. However, I recognized that these were temporary solutions and sought ways to address the root causes of these challenges.

This realization broadened my perspective on public health, where I discovered the transformative power of preventative measures. The pandemic opened my eyes to the field of Public Health, inspiring me to explore ways to prevent health-related problems before they occur. My dedication to the well-being of college students extends beyond emergency relief, and my leadership roles

have equipped me with the insights needed to bridge the gap between reactive solutions and proactive health education.

Receiving the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship would be instrumental in supporting my ongoing research and intervention efforts. Specifically, the scholarship funds will contribute to completing my dissertation project on problem gambling interventions among UNLV college students. The successful completion of my dissertation will significantly and innovatively impact the knowledge and practice surrounding problem gambling interventions among college students. Completing my dissertation will open paths to my professional career as a researcher and educator in Public Health, where I will leverage the MTM and other evidence-based approaches to develop interventions for preventing chronic diseases, promoting healthy behaviors, and addressing social determinants of health to reduce health disparities among children and youth. Securing the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship will empower me to continue contributing meaningfully to the field I love, aligning with my broader professional aspirations.

I am deeply honored to be considered for this scholarship, and I am confident that my background in health education, dedication to public health, and research accomplishments align with the objectives of the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship. If awarded this scholarship, I commit judiciously utilizing the funds to further my research and contribute meaningfully to the field.