Overview

Although it takes time and effort to make your global health experience a success, the rewards are invaluable. Participation in N 489 is a life changing event-something you will carry with you throughout your life. The skills you gain will greatly support any area of nursing that you choose.

Course Description

The course is designed as an INDEPENDENT endeavor. Faculty may be of assistance, but it is not the intent of the SON to plan your experience. It’s up to you! You have the option of traveling alone or with a small group to a country of your choice, for a length of time of your choice and to volunteer with a health care agency of your choice. Since 2008, students have traveled to every corner of the world in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the southern Pacific and Europe. Your destination is limited only by your imagination. Length of time in-country has ranged from 10 days to 10 weeks. The course, itself, is designed in 3 modular units: Module 1 Pre-Travel, Module 2 In-Country and Module 3 Post-Travel. There is a required text book with readings that complement the assignments, including a review of health literature, group forums and a final reflective paper.

Be aware that Health & Safety compliance and course requirements require a great deal of up front work.

Students traveling during the summer may not depart the US until after May 25 and must return to the US by August 5. Generally, travel at any time during June and July works well. Even if you plan to work in a hospital in the US for part of the summer, you must register for N 489 instead of N 487. All course assignments must be completed before the start of fall semester.

If you are traveling over winter break, travel plans should be finalized before fall break, compliance with OSA must be completed by November 1st and the Module I course assignments must be completed by December 1st.

The course will remain open throughout fall semester. All course assignments must be completed before the first day of spring semester classes.

Choosing a Destination

Some students travel with UNC based organizations such as with Atlantis Project, Carolina for Kibera or UNC’s Malawi Project. Other students travel through SON contacts - in Kenya and China- or with known
entities in Guatemala, for example. Other students travel through organizations specifically developed to support student travel abroad, such as International Service Learning (ISL), International Volunteer Headquarters (IVHQ) and Work the World (WTW). A list of groups such as these is updated each year by the Health Sciences Library and is included in the SON’s summer work experience site. Some students travel through personal contacts or their churches. The possibilities are endless. However, do not try to develop an experience independently through a large hospital, university or school of nursing. We have found that direct contact with large governmental agencies— at a personal level— doesn’t work. Prior attempts have led to disappointment and last minute change of plans for students. Unless you are a very experienced global traveler, your safest and surest option is to choose one of the established organizations mentioned above. Prior students have had great success with ISL, IVHQ and WTW.

Planning your summer global health experience should be based on two primary considerations: 1. the situation provides a good learning experience to meet course objectives and 2. your safety.

Students work as volunteers in hospitals, community health centers and with community based organizations such as orphanages, training programs for midwives, or faith based health and education centers. We ask that you identify a nurse who can serve as a mentor and help facilitate your experience. But you don’t have to work a long side a nurse 24/7. For the purposes of N 489, you must complete 84 hours in your chosen site or be in-country for a minimum of 10 days. Your in-country supervisor will sign a Verification form confirming completion of the experience.

Both Frommer’s and Lonely Planet travel books offer publications with specific information regarding volunteer opportunities abroad. The Bull’s Head bookstore on campus has a special section with resources for volunteer and service learning opportunities.

Frommer’s (2010) 500 Places where you can make a difference.


**Communicating with your Host Organization**

A document titled Statement of Purpose can be found at the SON’s summer experience site. A Spanish version is also available. It is printed on UNC SON letter head and can be used to help explain the rationale of the experience to an organization with whom you are negotiating for your experience. Be sure to let your host organization know that you are covered for medical insurance, travel insurance (including emergency evacuation) and liability (mal practice) insurance. Also let them know that you are in compliance with all CDC requirements regarding vaccines, and that you have completed special health and safety training (OSHA) regarding protection against blood borne pathogens, TB control and prevention of HIV exposure. Finally, reassure them that you are solely responsible for all financial costs of the trip and that as the host organization, they bear no financial responsibility.

**Financial Support for Your Global Experience**

Very early in the process look at the UNC Center for Global Education’s website for information about funding sources for travel abroad. The SON provides funding as well and information about the
application process goes out early each spring. Students have received funding from their local churches or community groups, such as the Rotary Club and others have received significant donations from family and friends. Don’t feel apologetic about asking for funds to support your travel. The global experience represents a professional development strategy that will have a significant impact on your future nursing practice as you provide care to a very diverse population in North Carolina. There are several websites developed specifically to help people fundraise for worthy causes. Check out GoFundMe which is one such site.

Health and Safety Compliance

Review the US State Department’s website early in the process (www.state.gov). If your country of choice appears on the State Department’s travel advisory or travel warning lists, get in touch with Chris Harlan (course faculty) and/or Kathy Moore (OSA) immediately to make sure UNC hasn’t put a hold on travel to that country.

Once you’ve identified the country to which you will travel, check the State Department and CDC websites for health and safety information (www.CDC.gov). Also check the SON’s HSR website for clinical compliance requirements for NURS 489. ALL students who elect to participate in N 489 MUST have documentation of having had Hepatitis A vaccine, be up to date with all vaccines required by the SON-plus TB tests and OSHA/HIPAA training. They must also provide additional documentation of having consulted with a health care provider and received vaccines specific to the country of travel. An appointment with Kathy Moore or Jessica Lambert Ward in OSA must be made well in advance of departure to be checked off on all pre-travel requirements, purchase of UNC travel insurance and sign UNC’s Release to Hold Harmless (mooreka@email.unc.edu).

Planning and Information Sessions

Each fall, Dr. Foster holds a required general information session regarding both N 487 (US based work experience) and N 489 (Global experience). A separate information session will also be held specific to N 489. Students who have traveled in previous years will be present to share their experience and respond to questions. Information about these sessions will go out via email in early fall. Special general information sessions are also held in the spring and summer for ABSN students interested in N 489.

A series of Q & A sessions will be held to help with planning. Information about these sessions will be posted at the summer work experience site and will be sent via email as well. Attendance at a Q&A session for N 489 is required at least once during the semester prior to travel.

Orientation to the course will be held at the end of the semester prior to travel. Do NOT make plans for departure until you know the date of this meeting. A wrap up session is also held just before classes resume in the semester following travel. These are the only face to face course meetings. Otherwise, all course assignments are completed online.

Chris Harlan, course faculty, is available for consultation by appointment: harlan@email.unc.edu