

South Texas Environmental Education and Research (STEER) Program

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley at Harlingen (UTRGV)—the UT medical school that serves the South Texas/Border Region—offers unique field experiences at the U.S.-Mexico border for medical students enrolled at the UTSOM and visiting students enrolled in U.S. MD/MPH, medical, public health, and other health professions degree programs. This 4-week elective is presented by the **South Texas Environmental Education and Research (STEER)** program, based in Harlingen, Texas since 2004.

WHO ATTENDS?



STEER-Harlingen students collect water samples on the Rio Grande River to test for biological contaminants.

STEER's 4-week elective is open to medical students enrolled at the UTSOM and accredited U.S. medical and health professions schools, as well as interested health professionals and faculty. STEER students receive training in environmental and public health including indoor air quality in relation to asthma, water quality, folk medicine, pesticides, heavy metals including lead and mercury, rabies, dengue fever and other topics.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

There are no tuition fees. Housing for visiting students is \$685 for the month. You will also be responsible for your travel to/from Harlingen, your meals, personal daily expenses and after-hours transportation and activities.

CAN I GET CREDIT FOR THIS?

The STEER program is an approved rotation and you will

receive credits toward your medical degree, or cross-credits for an MD/MPH degree.

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

If you are interested in international health, public health, or environmental health, this is an unforgettable *in vivo* experience that will help you see new career opportunities. You will learn from dozens of health practitioners in clinics and hospitals, researchers, *promotoras* (community health workers), and front-line public health workers on both sides of the border. These dedicated individuals face the challenges of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, rapid growth and industrialization, poverty, lack of sanitation, and water pollution. You will explore cultural differences that impact health and medical practice, and learn about community-based



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Remedial Project Manager explains the process of the superfund control to STEER-Harlingen participants.

research in childhood asthma, diabetes and obesity. You will hear about a host of environmental exposures, including pesticides among migrant farm workers, lead, mercury, indoor air pollutants, mold, allergens, and exposures that can affect the endocrine, nervous and respiratory systems. Experts will teach you about the binational TB program, migrant farm worker health, rabies and vector control. You will participate in instructional visits to *colonias*, *farmacias* (Mexican pharmacies), as well as learn about immigration and customs inspections. And you will have ample time to reflect upon your experiences with your instructors and classmates while you enjoy a colorful, historic, and culturally-rich region.



STEER-Harlingen students have an opportunity to interact with families in local colonia.

"A phenomenal 'eye opener'."

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAY:

"Uniquely the best program I have attended in my academic career. It taught me invaluable information that will stick with me for a lifetime."

"The issues facing South Texas are in large measure those facing the nation and, more importantly, the planet. I wish that all of my colleagues, indeed all Americans, could have this kind of experience."

AWARDS STEER HAS RECEIVED:

Spirit of the Land Award, Salt Lake Olympic Organizing Committee
 Texas Environmental Excellence Award, Texas State Governor's Award
 Partnership Award, Association of Physician Assistant Programs

TRAINING SITE:

Harlingen Office: STEER – Regional Academic Health Center
 2102 Treasure Hills Boulevard • Harlingen, Texas 78550



STEER-Harlingen students learn about potential risks on Environmental Exposures History, at the Dialysis Clinic Valley Baptist Medical Center.

2017-2018 SCHEDULE	
February 06 – March 03, 2017	February 05 – March 02, 2018
May 29 – June 23, 2017	June 04 – June 29, 2018
August 7 – Sept 1, 2017	August 06 – Aug 31, 2018
October 02 – Oct 27, 2017	October 01 – Oct 26, 2018

STEER program is offered if there are at least three qualified applicants. Limit of 10 students per rotation.
 *Additional rotations require funding

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION? See our website <http://www.utrgv.edu/som/steer/> for information and a downloadable application, or contact us directly at (956) 296-1470 or via email at steer@utrgv.edu.