PRACADEMIC WORK AS A PATHWAY TO POLICY CHANGE

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Pracademic
1. What is a pracademic?
2. How I work as one
3. Why we need more
I Am an Environmental Health Pracademic (And So Can You!)

Ken Runkle, MA, DPA, REHS

With apologies to Stephen Colbert for the title above (Colbert, 2009), let me confess that I am an environmental public health pracademic. What's a pracademic? I'm glad you asked.

Popularized by Paul Posner in the field of public administration, a pracademic is a person who spans the boundaries between practitioners and academics in ways that “enrich both theory and practice” (Posner, 2009). Roles range from practitioners who supervise internships, to practitioners who teach, train, or serve on college advisory boards, to academics who practice and conduct environmental health research. These are all roles.

Additionally, EHAC requires that each accredited program have an advisory committee that typically has members who are practitioners from both public and private sectors of environmental health. Programs benefit from an active and knowledgeable advisory team of pracademics working in public health agencies and businesses because they can see the academic program from a practitioner’s perspective and help ensure the curriculum is appropriate for preparation for careers in the environmental health field (EHAC, 2013).

Jessica Thorton, food program supervisor for the Sangamon County Health Department in Springfield, Illinois, is a local pracademic. She department and pool safety visits with state inspectors. The photos and stories obtained from the field help make class lectures timely, practical, and more real to my students.

At UIS, pracademics serve as adjunct faculty teaching courses in the MPH curriculum as need arises. While working at IDPH, I had the opportunity to teach environmental and occupational health each spring semester for 17 years. An IDPH deputy director has taught public health policy, an IDPH epidemiologist has taught epidemiology, an IDPH health assessor has taught environmental risk assessment, a CDC public health advisor has taught online courses, and an environmental communic-
public health practitioners

pracademics

academics

http://ipacimpact.blogspot.com/2013/09/what-is-pracademic_29.html
pracademics

1. People who **appreciate** the benefits of solving **real-world challenges** by combining practitioner and academic perspectives

2. Someone whose work as a practitioner **draws** heavily on academia, or whose academic work is closely **connected** to the practitioner’s world

http://ipacimpact.blogspot.com/2013/09/what-is-pracademic_29.html
Real World Public Health Challenges
Health is Not Random
Pracademics do both

Academics
Develop explicit knowledge (formal, systematic)

Practitioners
Develop tactical knowledge (observational, anecdotal)
How I work as a pracademic
Practitioner-driven research questions:

1. Where is safe?
2. What should we prepare for?
3. How are we doing our work?

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1. How do we prevent DUIs?
2. How can we address childcare as a public health issue?
How I work as a pracademic

Become a decision-maker.

or

Learn who the decision-makers are and form a relationship with them.
Pracademic work

- Tactical knowledge (observational, anecdotal)
- Explicit knowledge (formal, systematic)

Disseminated directly to the users/implementers/decision makers

Evaluated for effectiveness/usefulness/relevance
Why we need more pracademics
Academic positions come with:
Challenge
Privilege

In return, we agree to:
Improve our world,
Be a part of the community
PUBLIC HEALTH PRACADEMICS

MOLLY GUTILLA, DRPH, MS

Public Health Pracademics will explore the intersection between academia and practice with an eye toward recognizing those already bridging this gap and encouraging others to embrace efforts to link science and practice.