

# Teaching Health Impact Assessment Courses in Universities

Andrew L. Dannenberg, MD, MPH  
Affiliate Professor, University of Washington  
Dept. of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences  
Dept. of Urban Design and Planning

National Health Impact Assessment Conference  
Washington DC, April 4, 2012

# Teaching HIA in Universities

- Increasing demand for HIAs and capacity to conduct them
- Graduate level courses on HIA now at four universities
  - Indiana University
  - Johns Hopkins University
  - University of California at Berkeley
  - University of Washington
- New HIA courses planned to begin in 2012
  - Portland State University
  - University of Pennsylvania
- HIA exercises included in some courses elsewhere

# Common Content of HIA Courses in Universities

- Background information about HIAs
- Introduction to HIA methods
- Critical reviews of completed HIAs
- Exercises in the steps of conducting HIAs
- Active engagement in the conduct of an HIA of a local project; may collaborate with local decision-makers/stakeholders

# HIA Course

## University of Washington

- Cross-listed in
  - School of Public Health (environmental health)
  - College of Built Environments (urban planning)
- 10 week term, 2 credits, no prerequisites
- 25 students in 2011; ~20 students in 2012
- Approx ½ public health and ½ planning students

# Content of HIA Course University of Washington

- Extensive readings (skimming allowed)
- Written and oral critique of a completed HIA
- Class conduct of HIA of a current local project
  - Small groups work based on scoping topics
  - A few students volunteer to integrate final report
- Field visit to project site
- Student presentation of completed HIA to project stakeholders/decision-makers, to whom final report is submitted

# UW HIA Class Project, Spring 2011

- In collaboration with Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
- Examined equity, injury, noise, physical activity, social capital
- HIA made numerous recommendations that were subsequently incorporated into the project plans by SDOT



**King Street Station Multimodal Hub**

# Student comments on UW HIA course: 1 year later

- I have made good use of the information. In addition to some of the work I did for [a transportation professor], I am now a transportation planner for Puget Sound Regional Council. We are in the process of writing a new non-motorized [transportation] plan--that includes a strong health focus.
  - Urban Planning student
- I am still in school (2nd year MHA and 1st year MPH). I used [the HIA] class for my MPH practicum work [focused on the] state bill to include health in Washington state's transportation goals. Working [with a transportation advocacy group and the health department], my work has included background research about HIAs, assisting in drafting the legislation, writing testimony, attending hearings for the bill in the House and Senate, drafting letters of support to legislators, and energizing community partners.
  - Public Health student

# Student comments on UW HIA course: 1 year later

- I learned a good deal in the class last spring. I [used it to assist] a project manager at Public Health Seattle-King County with research on the potential health impacts of redevelopment around a planned light rail stop and transit center renovation. I [also hosted] a table at a community outreach meeting in which we asked people to select health concerns that were most important to them. I'm applying for jobs now ... I imagine [my HIA experience will] help to differentiate me from other candidates.
  - **Urban Planning student**
- I am hoping to use my skills with HIA to get a job in health policy.
  - **Public Affairs student**
- I have mentioned my experience on HIA in a couple of cover letters and on my LinkedIn profile.
  - **Engineering student**

# Comments from Seattle DOT collaborator: 1 year later

It was really nice to work with the class on this project as some of the issues and concerns that the students brought up, shed additional/different light on the project for me - having conversations with the students, who are not a regular part of our professional world, allowed me to see the project from a different perspective....

# Session speakers:

## Teaching HIA in Universities

- University of Washington
  - Andrew Dannenberg, MD, MPH (faculty)
  - Barbara Rose, MPH (student)
- Indiana University
  - Cynthia Stone, DrPH (faculty)
  - Aaki Bhargava, MPH candidate (student)
- Johns Hopkins University
  - Keshia Pollack, PhD, MPH (faculty)
- University of California at Berkeley
  - Edmund Seto, PhD (faculty)