Abstract for Paper in Response to the UML CITA Request for Paper Submissions

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Using A Web-Based Format to Conduct Impact Evaluation of a Worker Health and Safety Training Program

The University of Massachusetts Lowell has been, for 16 years, the base for a regional hazardous waste and hazardous materials incident emergency response workers health and safety training program. This program, The New England Consortium, currently includes five occupational health and safety advocacy organizations from throughout New England: The Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH); The Western Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (Western MassCOSH); The Rhode Island Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (RICOSH); the Connecticut Council for Occupational Safety and Health (ConnectiCOSH); and, the New Hampshire Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (NHCOSH). TN EC has trained over 14,000 workers since 1987, supporting more than 3,000 employers in their efforts to comply with federal health and safety regulations.

In 1994 and 1997, TN EC conducted telephone follow-up surveys to assess whether and how the training is helping program participants engage in activities to improve health and safety conditions at their workplaces. These impact evaluation efforts provided TN EC and UML with useful information about the effectiveness of this worker health education intervention, as well as its limitations. The 1994 effort secured a strong response rate, but the 1997 survey had a weak response rate. It appeared that individuals had become less willing to respond to telephone surveys. Discussions with other survey researchers confirmed for us that this is a trend beyond our survey experience. Therefore, TN EC successfully proposed to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences’ Worker Education and Training Program (the funding source for TN EC) to use web-based survey technologies to conduct the next follow-up evaluation survey.

This paper will discuss our experience in developing and conducting an evaluation survey using web-based technologies. We will present a review of the literature about web-based evaluation technologies and their use. We will discuss the advantages and difficulties of using these technologies to develop survey instruments and conducting a follow-up evaluation survey. Survey results will be presented, and an analysis of collected data, both quantitative and qualitative. We will conclude with a discussion of how this occupational and environmental health education intervention informs us of the possibilities and limitations of university-community partnerships aimed at supporting and building a regional health and safety movement that can promote public health as a key aspect of sustainable regional development.

This paper addresses the following topic areas listed on the CITA Request for Papers:

- Health and Its Many Links to Sustainability
- Universities Supporting Public Health and a Healthy Economy
- The Implications of Diversity for Supporting Public Health and a Healthy Society
- New Ideas and New Opportunities