



**James Alan Goggins**  
**JrCOSTEP 2009**  
**Western Carolina University**  
**Environmental Health Services Branch of**  
**the CDC**  
**Summer Undergraduate Programs in**  
**Environmental Health**

My name is Alan Goggins. I am a senior at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina, and I am majoring in Environmental Health. I participated in the US Public Health Service's JrCOSTEP program during the summer of 2009, where I was stationed with the Environmental Health Services Branch of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. My time as a JrCOSTEP has provided me with an experience I will carry with me for the rest

of my career.

The JrCOSTEP program is a highly rewarding internship for anyone hoping to gain professional experience in environmental health. It allows participants to work alongside and learn from some of the best environmental and public health professionals the field has to offer. Through my time as a JrCOSTEP with the Environmental Health Services Branch of the CDC, I experienced environmental health practices in a wide variety of fields. In the SUPEH program, we worked with Environmental Health professionals at the county, state, and federal levels. We coordinated field experiences with the USDA, the National Parks Service and the Vessel Sanitation Program to see how the programs function in Environmental Health. I was also able to see how environmental health functions at the federal level with my day-to-day work at the CDC.

As a participant in the JrCOSTEP program, I was able to take advantage of wide variety educational opportunities I could not have received anywhere else. I was able to attend the US Public Health Service Scientific and Training Symposium, where I learned from and networked with Public Health Officers from across the country. I attended the National Environmental Health Association's Annual Educational Conference, where I learned about emerging topics in the field of environmental health from top professionals. I also attended the United Nation and Cifal's International Water Symposium, where I was able to conference with environmental health professionals from across the world. Working at the CDC alone provided me with unique educational opportunities; at any given time, I had a wealth of knowledge and expertise at my fingertips. I was able to attend brown bag luncheons and lectures from the field's leading experts without leaving my office!

I think the highlight of my experience as a JrCOSTEP has been the people I have worked with. I cannot stress enough how much I have learned from my colleagues and mentors. Everyone I have worked with has been warm and inviting, and has taken time to share with me their experiences and lessons from the field. I have had the opportunity to work with professionals in a variety of fields, each boasting a unique set of skills and experiences I had the opportunity to learn from. I have been able to learn about their

career paths and how they achieved their success. I have had invaluable networking opportunities and have made lasting relationships with professionals in environmental health.

My JrCOSTEP experience has provided me with a great foundation for my career in Environmental Health. I have been able to experience environmental health practice in a variety of areas. From cruise inspections with Vessel Sanitation Program to county-level restaurant inspections with local environmental health professionals, my time as a JrCOSTEP has provided me with a wealth of experience and personal connections I will use throughout my career, as well as a new career avenue as a Public Health Officer with the Commissioned Corps. I can't think of any other program where a student will have the opportunity to do as much in Environmental Health while being mentored by experienced public health professionals. More importantly, the JrCOSTEP program helps young professionals find their niche in environmental health. I could go on and on about my experience as a JrCOSTEP, but my best advice would be to try it for yourself and make your own lasting memories.