

SOUTHWEST CENTER FOR OCCUPATIONAL  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS EDUCATION AND  
RESEARCH CENTER FOR OCCUPATIONAL  
HEALTH AND SAFETY

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SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2008 – JUNE 30, 2009

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NIOSH TRAINING GRANT NO. T42 OH008421

SUBMITTED BY:

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77030

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## Program Overview

The University of Texas (UT) Education and Research Center (ERC) is housed in the Southwest Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (SWCOEH) in the Division of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences (DEOHS) in the School of Public Health (SPH), and incorporates faculty and students from various disciplines related to occupational and environmental health. The overall goal of the Center is to respond to the critical need for well-trained occupational and environmental health (OEH) specialists by providing graduate level academic and research training in the OEH disciplines and continuing professional education. The UT ERC was established in 1977, and competed for the most recent five-year award in 2005, for the period July 2005 to June 2010, subsequently to be extended to June 2011.

The UT SPH is a multi-campus system with the main campus located in Houston in the Texas Medical Center, and five Regional Texas Campuses: Austin, Brownsville, Dallas, El Paso, and San Antonio. This makes the UT SPH unique among other schools of public health. All campuses are linked electronically, facilitating quality teaching and research, expanded course offerings, interdisciplinary collaboration and access to regional stakeholders, as well as expanded minority student populations. The UT ERC includes close collaboration with the UT School of Nursing located next door; the University of Houston; and other international universities and colleges. The UT ERC DHHS Health Region VI includes: Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and New Mexico. The SWCOEH has an active international program that includes exchanges of faculty and students to Latin America and Spain.

The current core and specialty academic programs of the SWCOEH ERC include a complete spectrum.

Core Academic Programs	Industrial Hygiene (IH) Online at <a href="http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1997">http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1997</a>
	Occupational and Environmental Medicine (OM) Online at <a href="http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1969">http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1969</a>
	Occupational Health for Nurses (OHN) Online at <a href="http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1984">http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1984</a>
Allied OH&S Academic Programs	Occupational Epidemiology (OccEpi) Online at <a href="http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1981">http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1981</a>
	Occupational Injury Prevention (IP) Online at <a href="http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1994">http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1994</a>
Center Wide Programs	Pilot Projects Research Training Program (PPRTP) Online at <a href="http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1999">http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=1999</a>
	NORA Research Support Program Online at <a href="http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx">http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx</a>
Continuing Education and Hazardous Substance Training	Occupational Health and Safety & Hazardous Substances Training Online at <a href="http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=2019">http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/default.aspx?id=2019</a>

A total of five academic programs and an active Continuing Education program provide a full spectrum of training opportunities, enhanced by annual support of pilot projects research training. The number of program trainees and NIOSH supported trainees are shown in the following table.

University of Texas Education and Research Center						
July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009						
Academic Program	MPH Trainees	PhD and DrPH Trainees	Total Program Trainees	Total Minority	NIOSH Trainees	Program Graduates
Industrial Hygiene	13	5	18	2	8	0
Occupational Medicine	4	0	4	3	4	2
Occupational Health Nursing	1	0	1	1	1	0
Occupational Epidemiology	-	3 (PhD)	3	2	3	1
Injury Prevention	-	2 (DrPH)	2	0	1	0

### Progress & Accomplishments

ERC program progress and accomplishments for this reporting period included new academic and research program development; increased online course offerings for degree programs; and further integration of the San Antonio Regional Campus into ERC activities. During the past year, the ERC faculty and trainees were involved in: 51 presentations; 47 peer-reviewed publications; 1 book chapter and 1 technical report; and 8 pilot research training projects were supported. Our NIOSH-funded occupational epidemiology trainee graduate accepted a post-doc position at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in North Carolina. Our occupational medicine (OM) trainee graduate is working in OM as a locum tenens in a variety of industries. Our Continuing Education program provided 19 courses across all disciplines during the year to more than 1600 participants; our Hazardous Substance Training program conducted 6 courses to over 230 participants. Highlights of some program accomplishments are further described below.

#### (1) New Academic and Research Program Development

During July 2008-June 2009, we continued to develop our relationship with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), via a NIOSH-funded State-based Occupational Safety and Health Surveillance grant. In this capacity, the UT ERC provided assistance to DSHS by supervising a student dissertation to evaluate the DSHS surveillance program. To strengthen collaboration with our region and the western states, the ERC participated in the NIOSH Western States Occupational Network (Weston) Conference in Denver, which brought together state occupational health representatives from the Western states and included four NIOSH ERCs and four NIOSH Agricultural Centers.

Our online training opportunities were increased this year with the offering of Occupational Epidemiology online, for the first time, from the San Antonio Regional Campus with 27 students, which included students from all four campuses (18 in Houston, 5 in San Antonio, 3 in Dallas, and 1 in Brownsville). Online and real time ITV connects all campuses electronically to allow for a greater

student mix and exposure to more courses from any of the UT SPH campuses.

## **(2) Meeting Regional and Diversity Needs**

During this reporting period, the UT ERC has continued to involve local and regional industries in needs assessment activities that are part of an ongoing strategic planning process with the ERC's Advisory Board. The Advisory Board membership includes representation from area industry, related professional associations, and ERC graduates. These data will guide the development of academic course curriculum and recruitment strategies. To assure a steady supply of trained OH&S professionals in the region, the UT ERC developed a comprehensive recruitment plan to be implemented during the next reporting period to increase student enrollment and minority representation. Diversity needs are addressed with the addition of targeted recruitment at area Historically Black and Minority Colleges and Universities (HBMCUs). Regional outreach activities included partnership with NIOSH in the development and dissemination of health and safety content into promotora (community health worker) training and outreach in Texas and the Southwestern United States. These activities will be further developed and continued in the next reporting period

## **(3) Pilot Projects Program Progress**

Our Pilot Project Research Training Program (PPRT) is an exciting program of the UT ERC that provides regional outreach and support to new investigators to develop research skills and pilot data for future study. During this reporting period, a total of 16 applications were received, and seven awards were made; one of these awards was a transitional award. Of the seven awards, five were made to other institutions in Texas, 1 in Arkansas, and 1 in the UT SPH in Houston. Our PPRT has distributed a total of 70 awards since its founding in 1999, with awards made within every state in our Public Health Region VI. The annual offering of pilot projects research funds continues to attract attention and increase the number of quality applicants.

## **Additional Information & Resources**

Information about the Center is available online at <http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/swcoeh/>. Academic- and specialty-related program information is available on the websites listed above. A copy of last year's annual report is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/oep/reports.html#ercreports>. For additional information, please contact Dr. Sarah Felknor, ERC Director, [Sarah.A.Felknor@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:Sarah.A.Felknor@uth.tmc.edu).