

Salute to PPE Site Managers

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By Ann Chenoweth, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA

For college seniors, May is the time when the job search intensifies—putting the finishing touches on the resume, buying that new interview suit, and making connections with alumni.

The professional practice experience (PPE) is an important part of student education and is a catalyst toward career development. It certainly was for me. I remember it like it was yesterday.

I was a senior finishing up my HIM program classes at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Mary McKenzie was director of the program. I remember Mary consulting with me about what I needed to do to round out my student experience and set myself on a path for a successful career.

Throughout my senior year, I worked on various HIM projects at Indiana University (IU) Health, which was a short walk from campus. Ann Rugg was the HIM assistant director and a wonderful mentor to me. IU Health is a large academic medical center and I learned a great deal from Ann about the various HIM functions in a large, complex, and often chaotic tertiary teaching hospital. After graduating, my dream was to work in a similar environment.

Mary thought it would be a good experience for me to be exposed to a small HIM department. She encouraged me to do my PPE at Putnam County Hospital in Greencastle, IN. Putnam County is a very small rural hospital. I gladly accepted the opportunity. Mary always knew best!

Lori Siegmund was the director of HIM at Putnam County Hospital. She was just a year older than me, having graduated from IUPUI in 1979. She seemed so wise and mature. She was the ultimate professional who I strived to be like from my very first day. Lori was instrumental in my learning. She certainly contributed to my readiness as a new HIM graduate entering the field. I was able to grow and develop. The HIM department had just five employees and Lori exposed me to every aspect of it. It was glorious!

The PPE is an important part of student education. PPE site managers play a vital and rewarding role in training the next generation of HIM professionals by supporting academic programs and the HIM profession through their participation. If we each do our part, we can ensure HIM students receive a thorough orientation to their new profession, and our HIM workforce will grow smarter, more informed, and better prepared to deal with the emerging issues of HIM practice in the 21st century.

Within a few weeks of my PPE I was moving to Chicago, IL, to start my new job as a manager in the HIM department at Cook County Hospital. I've gone on to have a very successful career—thanks in large part to Ann and Lori, who graciously shared their time, their knowledge, and their friendship with me.

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