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Student Working to Survey Health Service Providers in Rural Minnesota

Summary: Rilee Moulton '14 is working with Prime West Health and Center for Small Towns to create and improve survey questions for health service providers.

(November 5, 2012)-Rilee Moulton '14, Spicer, is currently working with the Center for Small Towns and Prime West Health, a County-Based Purchasing (CBP) health plan that is operated and overseen by 13 rural counties in Minnesota. Prime West Health helps to provide health care coverage to individuals who qualify for state-assisted healthcare programs.

Moulton has been working closely with Kelly Asche, the Center for Small Towns program coordinator, to create a series of survey questions directed at health service providers. The two aim to provide tools that will enable Prime West Health to better network with and understand the needs of the approximately 1,300 health service providers with whom they work. By improving communication with doctors and medical professionals, Prime West Health hopes to ultimately improve the health care experience for both health service providers and patients.

Work on the project began in September as Asche and Moulton began compiling the initial questionnaire concepts and questions. The survey was recently made available for health service providers to submit to Prime West Health. It will close in mid-November. Asche, Moulton, and Engin Sungur, professor of statistics, will be sorting and analyzing the resulting data.

Moulton, a sociology major looking to pursue a career in research, has found his work at the Center for Small Towns personally rewarding as well as helpful in providing him relevant, career-related skills and experience. He finds being involved with active research and survey methods exciting and worthwhile. Both he and Asche will remain dedicated to assisting Prime West Health until the project comes to a close in December.

The Center for Small Towns is a community outreach program housed at the University of Minnesota, Morris and serves as a point-of-entry to the resources of the University of Minnesota. Small towns, local units of government, k-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize the Center's resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. Their mission is to focus the University's attention and marshal its resources toward assisting Minnesota's small towns with locally identified issues by creating applied learning opportunities for faculty and students.

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