“Keep an open mind and be flexible! The program is such a good learning experience and if you keep a positive attitude and maintain a willingness to learn, you get a lot out of the program!”

“It is very important to meet with the host organization and understand their needs. Be honest about your abilities and what you hope to get out of the experience.”

“This program gave me the opportunity to work for Minnesota Department of Human Services, the largest organization in Minnesota. I gained valuable experience in public health research and I will definitely recommend to other students to participate in this program.”

“Do everything and anything, be flexible and patient, take charge of your learning.”

“Make sure you know what you’re supposed to get done in the time provided up front. And add a few extra weeks to whatever estimate you come up with.”

Be up front with the organization you are working with about your skills and strengths, as well as any weaknesses. If you work on a team project, decide on clear roles for team members at the beginning. This worked very well for my particular project.

“Use their experience not only to help an organization meet its needs but also to learn more about the community and topics/issues that interest them.”

“Set CLEAR and ACHIEVABLE objectives. Make sure you and the host organization are on the same page. Stay on track.”

“Gain a clear definition of the problem in the organization and the larger problem external (in our case healthcare, community, policy, society, etc.) scenario and ask for tools and resources as a first step. It would be helpful to track weekly project time by activity for both CHI and the client. Overall, great client-facing experience if you are matched with another consultant that is bright with a good work ethic.”

“Understand that being a consultant is basically providing a product (a service) to your client organization. It's not quite the same as being an employee, or being supervised. It's your job to both listen to what a client says they need, and figure out what you can provide, and then deliver that product.”

“Be open to suggestions from everyone involved at the organization. Work efficiently!”
I also think that students should feel comfortable explaining what they need to get the most out of the experience. Bi-weekly check-ins with the supervisor are really helpful. Really laying out the exact goals and objectives of the project in the beginning is helpful. And remember that the semester flies by!

Enjoy the CHI projects for what they are; hands on learning experiences where you can apply classroom materials to real life scenarios. Maintain open lines of communication with your client and set expectations and goals early and work to achieve them.

This is a wonderful opportunity to get real life experience in the field. Prepare to work independently, think creatively and take initiative to complete projects. Have fun with it and take everything you can from your experience!

Make sure to plan out a schedule with your organization that gives you enough time before finals! Communicate with the organization on a weekly basis.

To use this opportunity to apply their knowledge from their graduate school to develop competencies that would be very useful in advancing their careers

Write many notes during meetings both formal and informal. Always ask follow up questions to ensure that the entire team is on the same page and that you have clear guidelines on how to proceed. Present previously agreed upon objectives in hard copies in subsequent meetings.

Key Themes from Students:

- Time Management
- COMMUNICATION: with your fellow consultant, supervisor, CHI staff and other important stakeholders
- Be open and flexible to new ideas
- ASK QUESTIONS
“Push for your supervisors to be clear on what they're looking for, and meet with them frequently to make sure that's clear and that you're on track. Be willing to speak up if things are confusing or you're being given too much.”

“You get as much out of it as you put into it!”

“Take the initiative to ask questions and ask for feedback if they are unclear about expectations. Avoid making assumptions and initiate communication. Request regular check-ins to obtain feedback.”

“Make a schedule and balance the tasks with school work. Find support from the CHI program or the host organization.”

Be willing to share your strengths and know what you are good at so that you can contribute to the project. If there is something you are hoping to learn or experiment with, let the mentor know so that they can arrange for you to get this experience and coach you from their viewpoint. Mentors like to make a project be something you learn from and enjoy. If you are hoping to meet people that could open doors for you, be sure to make that known, too! Be open, willing and flexible!

“Provide a calendar of their classes and other commitments, so we can plan together in a better fashion.”

“Research the organization prior to committing to the project to make sure it is a good fit for both. Expect to have a clear, focused and realistic description of what you want accomplished in the short amount of time.”

“Have an open mind and come to the project with no preconceived notions about the organization. Make sure that you understand the purpose of the project. If there is any confusion ask questions. There is no wrong question.”

Communicate! Be really clear. And check your work - be sure to edit before sending work to any supervisors.

“Take advantage of the offer to shadow direct care employees. It is a great real life learning experience.”

“Take time to learn about the organization and its functions, remain connected to the organization for professional opportunities in the future.”
“Meet frequently with your intern and stick to the scope of the project as originally outlined (or be intentional in revising that scope).”

“Plan a student orientation, schedule regular checkins with students for status updates and to provide feedback, provide an exit interview, and plan a hand-off meeting if warranted. Assign a point person to students to provide guidance and support.”

“Have clear and realistic goals. Utilize student consultants for projects that you wish you could do, but don’t have the staff time or expertise to complete (rather than using student consultants for work that your organization is expected to carry out).”

“A very specific project is necessary due to the short timeline. We were pleased with the skill set and the quality of our student.”

“It's important to be somewhat flexible when working with students - plan with a little padding in the timeline if you're able!”

“Be supportive. Students who applied through this program are willing to help, so they need guidance and encouragement.”

“Set clear goals and deadlines, taking into account the students’ academic schedule.”

**Key Themes from Supervisors:**
- Meet with students: weekly or every other week
- Develop clear, specific objectives
- Be flexible with timeline
- Establish expectations early

Determine expectations from students and organization at the first meeting, including schedules and preferred communication methods.

“This is a fantastic program! Drawing up clear, time-specific objectives is very helpful - and of course being somewhat flexible on the timeline is necessary as graduate students have really full plates and sometimes it takes more time than allotted for a give project. Build in extra time - if the student is learning a new skill, or coming in for meetings, etc - tasks tend to take longer than we initially think they might.”