

St. Martin study abroad offers cross-cultural experience

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During their work on the island of St. Martin, Tulane University students worked with Rastafari elders who run the only agricultural farm that produces fresh, organic fruits and vegetables. (Photo from Myriam Huet)

Eight Tulane University undergraduate students immersed themselves in the cultural classroom of St. Martin this summer. The small Caribbean island became their campus, while community leaders, local artists and Rastafari elders became their teachers.

The students traveled to the island as a part of the two-week [“Engage in St. Martin”](#) international community engagement program through the [Tulane Center for Public Service](#) (CPS). Students earned academic credit for the anthropology course “Social Change, Sustainability, and Postcolonial Identity in the Caribbean” and fulfilled one of Tulane’s service graduation requirements while engaging in local service work.

“The program was transformative for the students,” said Myriam Huet, program manager for CPS internships.

Huet designed the program in collaboration with members of a local community, where she had lived while completing her doctoral research. “It’s rewarding to continue working with the people who taught me so much as a graduate student and be able to expose Tulane students to their knowledge and wisdom.”

Students worked with 4 Real We Agree With Culture, a nonprofit organization with the goal of promoting food sustainability on St. Martin. Students assisted the group in soil cultivation and the reintroduction of local plant species, youth education, and adult training and employment programs. They also conducted ethnographic research projects focused on local tradition, culture and history.

“One of the goals of study abroad programs is to engage in self-reflection. Just like any cross-cultural experience, studying abroad puts a mirror in front of you and also opens a window to the outside world,” said Huet. “Hopefully, you hang onto that, so when you come back home, you continue to keep that window open.”

Samah Ahmed is a junior majoring in public health at Tulane University.

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