

Student spotlight: Sustainable farming in India

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Tulane senior Liat Perlin, right, plants seeds on a farm in India as part of her internship with Navdanya, a network of organic producers and seed holders. (Photo from Liat Perlin)

This summer, the [Newcomb College Institute](#) (NCI) of Tulane University funded 26 student internships in New Orleans and around the world. NCI offers research and internship grants for women at Tulane. One of these students is Liat Perlin, who works at Bija Vidapeeth (Earth University), a Doon Valley learning center in the state of Uttarakhand, India.

The learning center is part of Navdanya, a network of organic producers and seed holders across 18 states in India.

Perlin is a senior, majoring in environmental science and psychology. She heard about the chance to intern with Navdanya through a professor who told her about Vandana Shiva, founder of the learning center. Shiva's writing on women's rights and rural sustainability piqued Perlin's interest, and she applied to Navdanya online.

For the internship, Perlin puts in four hours of work every day — in the kitchen, in the herb garden or on the farm. In the afternoons and evenings she has time for research and presentation.

"The space was so conducive to putting together really good work, and I ended up researching women's farming work in India," she explained.

Perlin says the internship has changed her perspective on what she wants to do with her career.

"I think it helped narrow down what I want to do. I've learned a lot about nonprofits and groups protecting rural businesses and farmers, and I think that's what I want to do after college — meaningful, fun and effective work."

So far, Navdanya has helped establish 122 seed banks and trained more than 5,000 farmers in sustainable agriculture.

"We love that our girls are all over the world, doing all kinds of work," said NCI program coordinator Elizabeth Lopez. "They are building women empowerment."

Claire Davenport is a junior at Tulane University, majoring in English and political science.

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