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Science Students Leave International Impacts

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SCIENCE STUDENTS LEAVE INTERNATIONAL IMPACTS

January 10, 2023

By Phoebe Pinkner

Associate Professor of Earth Sciences Dr. Ana Londono had an idea in 2021 – one that felt almost too far-fetched to be possible. She wanted to initiate a service-learning project where students would connect with a rural community in Latin America, meet virtually with the locals, learn about the environmental challenges they faced, propose an action plan to remedy those issues, and empower students to affect positive change in the world. This is precisely what happened in the 2022 spring semester.

For many students in Londono’s Fundamentals of Environmental Science class, this was their first time engaging with the subject. Londono contacted the NGO Global Brigade, whose facilitators connected her students with the rural community La Palma in southern Honduras.

When the student participation costs were shown to be higher than expected, associate provost of engaged learning Dr. Mark Valenzuela found the money necessary to ensure each of Dr. Londono’s students were able to engage in the project.

Once the service-learning began, students quickly learned La Palma had a strong sense of community and belonging, low crime rates, strong leadership, and awareness of their most pressing issues. These included lack of jobs, clean water, sanitation, transportation, and education. “...All these things I take for granted on a daily basis. I was so grateful to learn about [La Palma’s] challenges, and I can now use this experience to ground myself,” student Saskia Fuchs said. “We all get stuck in our own problems and thoughts from time to time, forgetting how lucky we are and how privileged our issues are.”

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