

Summer Internship Report 2017

Bre Ayala, C'17

Hometown: Medford, New Jersey



**Zamni Lasante (Partners in Health)
Haiti**

(Bre is on the far right of the photo)

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

This organization works together with coffee farmers in the central plateau of Haiti, specifically Bois Joli and Morne Michel, to reforest the land. This organization provides coffee and a variety of tree species seeds to the farmers. Each spring break and summer, Sewanee students go to these farms and measure the trees and coffee plants. These measurements determine how much the farmers will be paid through a carbon payment. This gives the farmers an incentive to keep their trees and plants alive instead of cutting them down for profit through making charcoal. This is also helping their farms because it is creating more canopy cover and better soil. This summer I hiked to Bois Joli and Morne Michel to work with the coffee farmers. When we arrived, we would hike to certain farms so I could interview the farmers. I had created a survey asking the farmers what illnesses they have encountered or contracted. If they used a plant, I would ask how they used it and which part of the plant. For example, "I used the leaves to make a tea." I slept over in the schools so the next morning I could go back to those farms and collect a sample of the plant and take a picture of the alive sample. Once we were back at our house, I would press the plants and once they dried, I glued them onto paper with a label containing the scientific name, Creole common name, and where it was collected. I also left a detailed list of how to use each plant for each illness. This project was the start of a herbarium that we are leaving in Haiti for a student there to continue working on.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

This summer in my internship, I accomplished creating new friendships and relationships with people from a different community and way of life. I also created a tangible herbarium for the students that live in the cities in Haiti can study from. I grew professionally by learning how to work with people that are very different from me. People in Haiti have cultural differences from people in the U.S and speak a different language but I was able to adapt to work and understand their way of life. I also learned how to create a research project, survey, administer it, and create a herbarium.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

While at Sewanee, I learned that you need to work hard and not give up if you want to accomplish your goals. This internship was very grueling due to the conditions of Haiti, but because I knew how to work hard I was able to finish this internship successfully.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

I learned how to work with people that speak a different language than me and have a different culture. I learned that being understanding and open is the best way to work with a team. My team in Haiti consisted of Haitian men and I had to learn how to get my point across and how to accomplish our work while having limited communication.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

This internship helped open my mind to what type of jobs I could have in the future.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

Since I was in Haiti, I was one of a few white people. Because of this, we were often stared at and it took us going up to people and talking to them for their perception of us to change. I learned that there is a stereotype that comes when you say you are American and the only way to break down that stereotype is by your own example.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

Thank you so much for funding this internship! I learned so much! I had never been to a developing country before so this experience opened my eyes tremendously and helped me grow as a person. I also feel so lucky that I was able to make friendships in Haiti and was able to give back to them in some way. Thank you again!