In 2006, Zanmi Agrikol (Partners in Agriculture) began combating the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in the Central Plateau of Haiti by helping families raise agricultural productivity by providing seeds, tools and training. In 2011, Sewanee and Zanmi Agrikol began a formal partnership to implement the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) project in the Central Plateau. Professor McGrath has led a rotation of Sewanee interns and post-baccalaureate fellows to establish and certify a pilot PES agroforestry project. The main objectives of the project are to improve agricultural productivity, create sustainable agricultural systems, and to build local and regional trading capacity. In May of 2013, Linnea Carver, Ford Rushton and I traveled to Haiti as the Sewanee interns to continue the project. We had all been to Haiti once before on the Spring Break Outreach Trip. During the internship, we stayed in Zanmi Lastante, a hospital compound in Cange, and traveled to the project community, Bois Jolie, about 3 times a week. Most of the route to Bois Jolie is impassable by car, so we hiked by foot about 2 hours up a mountain to do meet our farmers. Our main responsibilities for the summer internship was to conduct land surveys and family interviews to create a baseline for carbon offset program, and to continue to build a nursery of seedlings to distribute to farmers involved in the project.

The most important skill I developed during this internship was learning the Kreyol language. Although I am still not completely proficient, communication was a critical component of working in Haiti. With our broken Kreyol, the Sewanee interns and Haitian farmers were able to learn from each other. By talking to Haitians and reading about Haiti, I learned about the history of Haiti, the revolution, followed by the deforestation, and the current challenges facing Haiti after the earthquake. Life in Haiti is an adjustment. Without reliable electricity or water,

plans were always changing and everyday was different. Every task to further the project was a learning experience for everyone involved.

One of our first tasks was to build a nursery. In America, we would usually have a hardware store to buy tools and materials. In the Central Plateau of Haiti, there weren't any hardware stores, so we learned how to improvise from the Haitians; they used machetes when we would use a saw. In turn, we brought a few tools, such as a staple gun, and taught them how to use them. Once the nursery was built, we planted a variety of seeds. There was a balance of the Haitians knowledge about farming in their homeland and the Sewanee interns' education about agriculture. At the end of our internship, we had planted a total of about 13,000 coffee seeds, 1,000 mango seeds, 100 chen seeds and an assortment of other seeds. By the end of the summer internship, the coffee germination rate was about 85% and many of the seedlings had developed their first true leaves. In addition to the nursery and seedlings, we also conducted a total of 34 land surveys and interviews throughout the Bois Jolie community. For each of the 34 families involved in the project, we walked to their house to see their land and meet their family. We took GPS points of the land, then collected information about the family, income, current crops, livestock and expenses. All of this information will be used to create a baseline for the carbon offset program, Plan Vivo.

Although we were able to accomplish building a nursery, planting 15,000 seeds and conducting 34 surveys, our work has only began. The project is still in the early stages. Although we have begun the work needed to reforest Haiti, the key now is the relationship building with the farmers. With the carbon-offset program, we will hold training sessions to educate the farmers about PES, but the farmers are locked into a contract for about 40 years, which requires maintaining a relationship for support and reliability. Since the seedlings are still in the nursery, I

can't say that we have made a difference in the life of our farmers yet. Reforestation and carbon sequestration is a long process, so for now, I think we represent hope for the farmers. My involvement in this project is not done, and I cannot wait to see it progress.

After learning about Haiti's history and talking to Haitians about foreign aid, I have formed a strong opinion about the importance of sustainable aid. We do not want Haiti to be reliable on America or any other county forever. The Sewanee-Haiti PES project is sustainable aid because we are educating and training the farmers, instead of doing the work for them. They are asked to bring some of building material, and we will bring the rest. We eat together. We are working alongside the farmers, making it a learning experience for both the Sewanee students and the Haitian farmers. The poor living conditions are almost unbelievable, but they are strong, hopeful people. You can feel sorry for them, but getting to know them changes that feeling.

Before I became involved in the Sewanee-Haiti PES project, I never thought of a career in environmental studies or agriculture. Although my career goals are still undecided, I am now considering how to involve a place like Haiti into my interest in health and medicine. I don't think this country needs a foreign doctor, I think it needs fixes to the causes of the most prominent problems such as malnutrition and cholera which are caused by environmental issues. A program like Sewanee-Haiti PES project can fix malnutrition. Reforesting will help create more productive soils and help retain water, and selling carbon-offsets will create a second source of income to help pay for food or school. Although my summer internship in Haiti was physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting, the relationships I built and the work that started will keep me coming back for the rest of my Sewanee career.