

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM FUNDED EXPERIENCES

INTERESTED IN STUDYING ABROAD? CHECK OUT THEIR EXPERIENCE BELOW!

DESTINATION: BELIZE

TRIP TITLE: BELIZE NATIONAL ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE MONITORING SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

AWARD RECIPIENT: CHRISTIE HAMMONS, DVM

2ND YEAR MPH PROGRAM AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE RESIDENCY PROGRAM

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

“Even upon getting to the airport in Belize and waiting in the customs line, I was excited and ready to start my month-long adventure in Belize City! I lived with a host family, and so when I first got into town, my host mom showed me around the city, acting as tour-guide with insightful comments and information, ending with a supper at one of their favorite restaurants. My host mom loves to cook, and the family spent every dinner together, discussing life in the city and some of the political unrest at the time. I was able to experience many other things as locals do, such as grocery shopping, walking the dog, and attending a high school fair.

At work in the Belize Agricultural Health Authority Food Safety branch, I shared an office with the microbiology and chemistry laboratory technicians, as well as the Deputy Director of Food Safety Services—who has been my main contact that I have been working with online and through video conferences. A lot of my experience was in-office, drafting and reviewing literature. There were also site visits to poultry and shrimp production plants, as well as to poultry farms. I was able to use my veterinary and public health expertise to give feedback on these trips and during meetings, such as for animal welfare, HACCP, veterinary drug use, and national antimicrobial resistance plans across human, animal, and food sectors. Some of my most valuable experiences were car rides with colleagues to sites or meetings in other towns, and being able to discuss government structure, public health opportunities, and progress in food safety.

On weekends, the opportunities to explore Belize seemed endless. While I was there, my partner came to visit for a little over a week. One weekend, we took a bus to San Ignacio. This was an amazing area where we were able to visit a market, explore and spelunk in the rediscovered Actun Tunichil Maknal cave—which had served long ago as a sacred Mayan location—and ride horses and hike around the Xunantunich temple site. On the following weekend, we visited one of Belize’s islands and went snorkeling at several sites along the world’s second largest coral reefs where we swam within meters of a large loggerhead turtle and a school of nurse sharks.”

How did the scholarship enhance this experience? Would you encourage other students to apply?

“The global engagement travel scholarship gave me a tremendous amount of financial support for me to travel to work in-person with my colleagues to finalize the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System in the food and agriculture sector, and to stay for the length of time I did. It allowed for added depth of communication and shared experiences, which takes so much longer to achieve across distances. I think students should apply for this scholarship to support their projects or experiences that will most effectively be accomplished abroad. It is invaluable to be able to apply what you know as a professional in other settings, and to be able to learn from professionals in other cultures.”

Pictures from the Program!



Figure 1: Dr. Christie Hammons finishing her lunch break and returning to her office in the Belize Agricultural Health Authority Food Safety Services.



Figure 2: Dr. Christie Hammons on top of a temple, gazing across at the Actun Tunichil Maknal site in a downpour of rain.



Figure 3: (From left to right) Natalie Gibson, Christie Hammons, Stephen Williams, and Joe Myers. Members of the ad hoc Antimicrobial Resistance Subcommittee for the Agriculture Sector after the National AMR Committee meeting at the Belize location of the Pan-Ameri