

Engineering International Programs Office Interview with Rawan Osman *October 30, 2019*

Engineering and Public Health in Guatemala - Summer 2019

Engineering and Public Health in Guatemala is a two-week program over the summer in which students see firsthand how engineering and public health are intimately connected and deeply by their social and economic environment. Students also have the opportunity to earn three (3) UVA credits after successful completion of the program. It is open to all UVA students and has no Spanish language ability is required. 2nd-year Computer Engineering student Rawan Osman shares her Summer 2019 experience in Guatemala in the article below. Here is her story.



UVA in Guatemala Reflection

It was 5 am my first morning in San Lucas Toliman, Guatemala. I climbed stairs passed the rooms of my sleeping UVA and Guatemalan friends to the top floor of our hostel. And I stood, mesmerized by the gorgeous view of Lake Atitlan. The sight of the early sun climbing the volcano steeps, the mixed sounds of chirping birds and barking dogs, and the cool feeling of the foggy, morning air on my skin was an incredible start to an unforgettable two weeks.



Each day of the UVA in Guatemala program was jam-packed with unparalleled memories and lessons. Our group of 30 students and instructors started each morning by standing in a circle and sharing personal stories and goals. We then walked together towards the banks of the Lake Atitlan for a hot breakfast of beans, tortillas, fresh watermelon juice, and eggs taken from the farm that morning. Some days, Jessica, a leader in the UVA-Guatemala Initiative (UVA GI), taught a lesson on the Guatemalan healthcare system. Other times, we had a guest speaker tell us about the influences of American missions on education in San Lucas Toliman. On my favorite days, we took tours led by San Lucas natives. We visited the beautiful white church built by Father Gregory, the lakeside where people were bathing and washing laundry, and the colorful cemeteries. With each tour and lecture, we learned about the rich and complex history of Guatemala, and the ways in which Guatemalan and US social infrastructures resemble and differ.

The afternoons involved traveling throughout neighboring cities and towns. Walking on foot, we went to the medical center of San Lucas and engaged with the doctor of the town. With a 30-minute boat ride, we crossed the shimmering Lake Atitlan to the tourist town of Panajachel. Here, we walked deep into the town, past the shoreline markets, past clusters of homes, to the local wastewater treatment plant. Engineers walked us through the details of how they took old, abandoned infrastructure and transformed it into a functional plant. Other days, we stood on the back of pick up trucks and cruised along the curving mountainside roads to community developments. Many families graciously opened their homes to us and showed the biosand filters provided by UVA GI for clean drinking water.



