

NURSING STUDENTS SPEND SPRING BREAK Exploring Other Cultures

By Katie Phelan

While most students spend spring break relaxing and hanging out with friends, three College of Nursing students decided to learn about the health care system in another culture. Senior BSN students Teneisha Williams, Ashley Raum, and Alexandra Giralt spent a week in the Yucatan Peninsula participating in an international independent study with professors Dr. Carmen Rodriguez and Dr. Sharleen Simpson.



Assistant Professor Carmen Rodriguez holds a young patient.

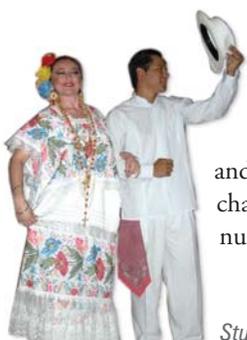
The students and professors visited nursing students at the Universidad Autonoma de Yucatan (UADY), toured local hospitals and participated in community activities. The students were given the opportunity to learn about the local nursing program by watching presentations and touring the two campuses: Merida, the larger campus, and Tizimin, the smaller campus. The students observed how the program at Tizimin is focused more on the community, working closely with the Mayan population.

Although the UF and UADY nursing programs are similar in some ways, the students saw several differences. One of the main differences the students noted was the length and compensation of the “service year” UADY nursing students must complete upon graduation.

“The service year is similar to our practicum rotation, only it lasts one year and they are paid a small amount for transportation and living arrangements,” said Raum.

Along with learning about health care, the students were immersed in the Mayan culture. Throughout the week, they enjoyed traditional Mayan music, dancing, food, and activities.

They learned a lot about the Hispanic culture and their health care system. Students were also given the chance to teach the UADY nursing students about UF’s nursing program.



Students attended a traditional Mayan dance performance.

“I am very interested in other cultures and was happy to have the opportunity to learn about the health care system and nursing school of another country. I think that there are so many possibilities for improving our nursing school and the way we practice health care in the U.S. when we look outside the confines of our own system to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of another,” explained Raum.

“I wanted the opportunity to go do something different, something exciting. It was a great experience. I really feel like I experienced a little bit of all of the Yucatan in that jam-packed week. I have learned to be thankful for all the things we have in our country, including the basics such as air conditioning and having gloves readily available,” said Giralt.

“Visiting UADY on the Yucatan Peninsula was an opportunity I may never experience again and I am glad I spent spring break exploring another culture. We read in our textbooks about how we should approach people from different countries. I thought that having the chance to observe would teach me a lot more than a textbook ever could,” said Williams.



[top] UF and UADY students and faculty. Teneisha Williams (second from left), Alexandra Giralt (second from right) and Ashley Raum (right) with UADY students.