

The Malawi WASH Study Abroad Program

What was it?

July 10th-July 29th 2016: This study abroad course provided students with a unique opportunity to understand water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) issues in Mzuzu, Malawi through applied research, field trips, small group activities, and classroom lectures. The course was based in northern Malawi and worked in partnership with Mzuzu University students and faculty members and the University's Center of Excellence in Water and Sanitation. This unique center is a regional hub for water and sanitation research in Africa that focuses on applied research, low-cost technology development, and practical applications of research findings. The center is connected to the faculty of Environmental Sciences at Mzuzu University, the Malawi government, and several NGO's focusing on sustainable development issues. Research projects included: a hygiene and sanitation assessment of public sites, mapping the water and sanitation services in a community, and risk of fish contamination from the boat to the market (Nkhata Bay to Mzuzu). Additionally, students had the opportunity to complete in-country internships with various organizations working on WASH-related issues after the course dates.

Who was involved?

Instructors:

Dr. Emily Van Houweling (University of Denver)

Dr. Ralph Hall (Virginia Tech University)

Dr. Mavuto Tembo (University of Mzuzu)

Dr. Rochelle Holm (University of Mzuzu)

Students:

9 graduate students from the University of Denver and 9 graduate students from Virginia Tech University, as well as students from the University of Mzuzu.

What was said? What was the impact?

3 policy briefs submitted to stakeholders, and 2 peer reviewed journal articles submitted as a result of the applied research.

“I have never obtained half as much valuable and applicable knowledge during a school course than I did during the WASH Malawi course during Summer 2016. Going into this experience, I was certain I would learn a lot, however I could not have fathomed the breadth of knowledge and experience I would observe and take home. The challenges faced, the collaboration between students of all different ages, cultures, and backgrounds, and the hands on, in country setting all combined to make the perfect learning environment on so many levels. This course pushed me out of my comfort zone on many occasions, for which I am extremely thankful, as I believe that when one is made to feel uncomfortable, their eyes are opened far wider than they might have been otherwise.”

-Quote from a graduate student