

Rollins College Activism 101: Engaging Students in Local and Global Communities

First-year students from Rollins College spent the past four months connecting and engaging in a service-learning course called Activism 101. Supported in part by Florida Campus Compact Impact Project Funds, Rollins students studied activism from both intellectual and practical perspectives engaging in curriculum and service focused on creating positive change in local and global communities. As a central piece of the course, students worked with multiple community partners across Central Florida including Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida, Boys and Girls Club, and Ronald McDonald House. Students in Activism 101 spend their year living together in one of the Living Learning Community Residence Halls at Rollins.

Serving as the "capstone experience" for Activism 101 students, faculty, and student peer mentors traveled to Cuenca, Ecuador in December to engage in a two week service immersion teaching high school students at Gabriel Arsenio Ullauri. Rollins students engaged with youth in teaching computer skills, math, English and Physics and studied the people, politics, and culture of Ecuador during the fall term in preparation for their immersion experience.

According to Professor Les Lloyd, Chief Information Officer and instructor of Activism 101, "The school is unusual in that it is located in an economically underserved area. Fewer than 50% of Ecuadorian children progress past the mandatory 6th grade education, and less than 50% of those complete high school.

Rollins students enrolled in the course had a life-changing journey and experience. According to Rollins College student Kayla Florio, [Activism 101] allowed the lessons taught in a classroom to become invaluable information backed by hard evidence. We take classes every day where we hear about the poverty, economic and political problems of other countries, but we rarely have the opportunity to see them first-hand.

Engaged scholarship and community partner involvement also created opportunities for students to further define purpose and career goals. Joe Naranjo shared, Working with students led me realize that I want to join the Peace Corps after my four years at Rollins College. After the Peace Corps speaker in our class earlier this term, I kicked around the idea. I realized there was nothing better for me to do after college than to join as it would allow me to see the world and experience new cultures while at the same time I would be doing something for the betterment of others.

According to Lloyd, As one of the Rollins students mentioned, if we made a difference to just one or two students who graduate from high school where they might not have before, the project was successful.