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# IMPACT Belize 2010 Executive Report

Ritchie D. Taylor

Western Kentucky University, [ritchie.taylor@wku.edu](mailto:ritchie.taylor@wku.edu)

Jordan Norris

Western Kentucky University, [jordan.norris86@gmail.com](mailto:jordan.norris86@gmail.com)

Molly Calico

Western Kentucky University, [molly.calico610@gmail.com](mailto:molly.calico610@gmail.com)

Bernie Strencky

Western Kentucky University, [bernie.strencky@wku.edu](mailto:bernie.strencky@wku.edu)

Daniel Carter

Western Kentucky University, [daniel.carter@wku.edu](mailto:daniel.carter@wku.edu)

*See next page for additional authors*

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**Authors**

Ritchie D. Taylor, Jordan Norris, Molly Calico, Bernie Strenecky, Daniel Carter, Dawn Garrett Wright, Eve Main, Bonny Petty, Molly Kerby, and Jill Norris



## Executive Report

**Western Kentucky University  
College of Health and Human Services**

## Letter from the Director

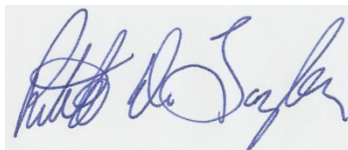
Dear Friends:

Thank you for taking this opportunity to review our report of IMPACT Belize 2010. You will find that IMPACT Belize is an exemplary international health service learning program at Western Kentucky University, housed in the College of Health and Human Services. This interdisciplinary program encompasses students and faculty from multiple colleges, disciplines, and nationalities. We feel it is a great privilege to share with you the IMPACT Belize experience.

As you read this report, please note that the students and faculty participating are among the University's finest. We experience Belize not from afar, but as part of a living and learning community. Our team of exceptional students and faculty actually become part of the village of Gales Point, Belize. In fact, the village has now provided us with a "social contract" that specifies the services they need, a welcome to assist their village, and an invitation to be part of the Gales Point community. This is true service learning, as we work with the people of Gales Point and Belize to engage students in hands-on reflective learning and empower the community.

It is my expectation that you will take advantage of this occasion to read about our experiences. During IMPACT Belize 2010 we fostered a greater working relationship with the Belize Ministry of Health. Our hope is that this relationship will spread our public health impact to other rural villages in Belize. The most amazing part of this adventure is how the lives of the villagers, our students, and faculty are changed through service learning. We do hold fast to the motto that, "to whom much is given, much is expected." We know that our education is something we share in a community, as we live and learn. This is the essence of the IMPACT Belize experience.

Sincerely,



Ritchie D. Taylor, Ph.D.

Director, WKU IMPACT Belize





**IMPACT Belize**  
**College of Health and Human Services**  
**2010 Executive Report**  
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## **IMPACT Belize**

### **College of Health and Human Services**

#### **Executive Summary**

IMPACT Belize at Western Kentucky University (WKU) is an interdisciplinary service learning program directed by the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS). The departments that collaborate in this endeavor are Public Health, Allied Health, the School of Nursing, and the Institute for Rural Health. As in 2009, this year we continued expansion of IMPACT Belize to include the department of Women's Studies. We anticipate that IMPACT Belize will again expand in 2011 to include faculty and students from the department of Social Work.

The two primary objectives of IMPACT Belize are to:

1. Engage faculty and students in socially responsive service learning through interdisciplinary teaching and learning, and;
2. Empower the people of Gales Point, Belize to solve their own problems.

IMPACT Belize engages students, faculty, and Staff of WKU. A continued approach is to include professionals from the community that provide service learning opportunities in the village of Gales Point, Belize. The key element is that all participants are empowered through international service learning that is interdisciplinary.

The WKU IMPACT program has taken place annually in the village of Gales Point, Belize since January of 2005. In 2010, students from the disciplines of environmental health science, public health, nursing, dental hygiene, and women's studies participated. This program differs from traditional study abroad programs in that faculty and students live in the community and work with the people of the village to solve community problems. Because we adhere to the principles of service learning and combine those practices with a focus on social responsibility, this program is truly unique and provides an excellent opportunity for student engagement. As a result, students develop a clear understanding of the connections between their service, social interactions, and real-life applications.

Prior to opening the clinic in Gales Point, representatives from the IMPACT program, including faculty, health care providers, and students, met with officials from the Ministry of Health. The goals of the meeting were to inform the Ministry that the program was operating under their jurisdiction, to receive feedback and suggestions on how to tailor the program to best ensure continuity of care for Gales Point patients, and to form a lasting partnership with the Belizean government. Following the meeting, the Ministry of Health sent a group of officials to Gales Point for a site visit to the clinic. The IMPACT program is committed to this new partnership and will strive to strengthen it in the future.

Continuance of IMPACT Belize indefinitely into the future will require a sustainable commitment of faculty, support, and vision. A goal of the program is to acquire permanent funding that will have an impact on generations of WKU students and communities in need of service throughout the world. An international legacy is created with sustainable funding.

To conclude, the IMPACT program in Belize is one of the most unique educational programs in service learning in the country. Through this initiative, faculty and students are provided an opportunity to live

and work in a remote Creole community in central Belize. The program employs a collaborative problem solving approach to address community needs. The elected community officials identify critical community needs and WKU responds by establishing credit-bearing experiences that address these needs. Students have the opportunity to have interdisciplinary experiences and learn the importance of cultural competency. During the years that this program has been in operation, the program has created a comprehensive health and dental program, a water quality plan for a sustainable drinking water supply, and a public health education program. In the future, the IMPACT program will continue to pursue current initiatives while also expanding to include additional disciplines.

# IMPACT Belize

## College of Health and Human Services

### 2010 Executive Report

#### About IMPACT Belize

IMPACT Belize at Western Kentucky University (WKU) is an interdisciplinary service learning program directed by the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS). The departments that collaborate in this endeavor are Public Health, Allied Health, the School of Nursing, and the Institute for Rural Health. As in 2009, this year we continued expansion of IMPACT Belize to include the department of Women's Studies. IMPACT Belize will again expand in 2011 to include additional faculty and students from the department of Social Work.



The two primary objectives of IMPACT Belize are to:

1. Engage faculty and students in socially responsive service learning through interdisciplinary teaching and learning, and;
2. Empower the people of Gales Point, Belize to solve their own problems.

The foundation of WKU's IMPACT program is collaborative community problem solving. The approach begins by asking the community the basic question: "What can we do to enhance the quality of life in your community?" Only after listening to the villagers and hearing their needs and concerns, can service learning begin. Rather than simply working through the curriculum, service learning requires that students and faculty work with community members to improve quality of life in the community. It is through this collaboration that learning takes place.

#### Program Participants

IMPACT Belize engages students, faculty, and Staff of WKU. A continued approach is to include professionals from the community that provide service learning opportunities in the village of Gales Point. The key element is that all participants are empowered through international service learning that is interdisciplinary.

#### Students

Students that participated in IMPACT Belize 2010 were from the disciplines of dental hygiene, nursing, public health, environmental health science, and women's studies. This diverse group of sixteen extremely talented students was primarily from rural Kentucky, with one international student from India, and several from metropolitan areas within the southeastern United States. The student selection process is competitive, includes a written application, and requires an essay that must answer the

question, “Why do you want to participate in the program?”. A primary goal of selection is to have the very best students, those that have an exceptional academic background and a great desire to conduct service learning in an international setting. In essence, this process is built so that IMPACT Belize doesn’t include only students that can afford to go. The aim is to engage a qualified, diverse, and highly service motivated group of students to make a lasting impact on their learning and in the lives of others.

As a student, service in Belize included assisting in the medical and dental clinic, providing health education, conducting environmental health studies, working with the Gales Point community to attain environmental quality, including safe drinking water, and leadership of the program. Students have a focus on reflective learning, assessing how their knowledge and skills have empowered them to the life-long challenge of giving back to others through service. It is in this international setting that many are faced with realities of life that require breakthrough thinking.

The success of any program can only be measured by the success of the students. Accomplishments of IMPACT Belize 2010 students include, acceptance into Ph.D. programs, medical school, graduate programs, service oriented research, and beginning professional careers of service. Other successes include scholarships, presentations at local and national conferences, and further engagement in service learning, both locally and abroad.

#### Faculty

Faculty in the program are committed to providing students with an exceptional international service learning experience. This commitment is exemplified in the attitudes, work ethic, and experiences of the faculty. From diverse educational backgrounds, the faculty bring the very best of interdisciplinary service learning to the students.

In integral part of IMPACT Belize is the development of international service learning scholars. Each and every faculty member must first participate as a scholar. To this end, the program operates to develop life long scholars that have service as a core discipline in teaching. Scholars participate by discovering how the Gales Point community needs the services that their students would provide in the future. Scholars learn to ask the basic question of service learning, “What can we do to enhance the quality of life in your community?”.

Faculty that participated in IMPACT Belize 2010 included:

Dr. Ritchie Taylor, Program Director, Discipline: Environmental Health Science, WKU Department of Public Health, College of Health and Human Services

Dr. Daniel Carter, Medical Director, Discipline: Dentistry, WKU Institute for Rural Health and Development, College of Health and Human Services

Dr. Bernie Strenecky, Service Learning Director, Discipline: Service Learning, WKU Resident Scholar, Office of the Provost

Dr. Eve Main, Nursing Coordinator, Discipline: Nursing, WKU School of Nursing, College of Health and Human Services

Dr. Dawn Garrett, Nursing Coordinator, Discipline: Nursing, WKU School of Nursing, College of Health and Human Services

Ms. Bonnie Petty, Dental Hygiene Coordinator, Discipline: Dental Hygiene, WKU Institute for Rural Health and Development, College of Health and Human Services

Dr. Molly Kerby, Scholar, Discipline: Women's Studies, WKU Department of Women's Studies, University College

### **Partnering with the Belizean Government**

Prior to opening the clinic in Gales Point, representatives from the IMPACT program, including faculty, health care providers, and students, met with officials from the Ministry of Health. The goals of the meeting were to inform the Ministry that the program was operating under their jurisdiction, to receive feedback and suggestions on how to tailor the program to best ensure continuity of care for Gales Point patients, and to form a lasting partnership with the Belizean government. Following the meeting, the Ministry of Health sent a group of officials to Gales Point for a site visit to the clinic. The IMPACT program is committed to this new partnership and will strive to strengthen it in the future.



### **Gales Point, Belize—A WKU Living and Learning Community**

The WKU IMPACT program has taken place annually in the village of Gales Point, Belize since January of 2005. This program differs from traditional study abroad programs in that faculty and students live in the community and work with the people of the village to solve community problems. Because we adhere to the principles of service learning and combine those practices with a focus on social responsibility, this program is truly unique and provides an excellent opportunity for student engagement. As a result, students develop a clear understanding of the connections between their service, social interactions, and real-life applications.



Originally settled by logwood cutters in the early 1800s, the village of Gales Point is still populated by many of their descendants. This Creole village is located on a four-mile long peninsula in the Southern Lagoon of Belize. Located within a national wildlife sanctuary, the Southern Lagoon is home to many species, including 5 endangered species, and provides an extraordinary setting for an international service learning experience. The northernmost tip of the peninsula is the site of the Manatee Lodge, where students and faculty live and study for a week. Students are immersed in the rich culture of Gales Point and have an opportunity to learn about everyday life in a rural Belizean village.





## International Service Learning in 2010

### Public Health—Environmental Health Sciences

The environmental health sciences team, directed by Dr. Ritchie Taylor, continued their work with the villagers of Gales Point, Belize to achieve the goals of establishing and maintaining a consistently safe drinking water supply for the community. Part of ensuring a safe drinking water supply is identifying contaminate sources within the system and in the environment. The environmental health sciences team collected numerous water samples and tested them to identify such sources contamination, with a focus on improper human waste disposal. With the data collected in 2010, the students have begun to develop targeted interventions to improve water quality in the future. Safe drinking water is essential to a healthy life. Western Kentucky University takes great pride and honor in being entrusted with such an integral part of a community's needs and livelihood. The main goal of the environmental health sciences project is to partner with the community to develop a consistently safe drinking water supply.





### Public Health Education

Graduate students in the Master of Public Health program continued their work with members of the Gales Point, Belize community to assess knowledge and perceptions of water quality and treatment issues. The goal of this research is to inform public health education strategies. In 2009, students developed and field-tested a survey to better understand community perceptions of water quality, knowledge of water-borne diseases, and water usage. Students then utilized this data to revise the survey. In 2010, students administered the revised survey to 85% of the households in the village.

The purpose of the health education research was to examine the existing beliefs, knowledge and attitudes toward water quality practices while also providing more information about the community and how they use water in their everyday lives. The water perceptions

survey was done in cooperation with the community of Gales Point and received approval at Western Kentucky University. The information will be used in the future to provide more effective interventions and identify major issues regarding water treatment and health.

Additionally, Public Health Education students organized and implemented a health fair, with the aid of Nursing and Allied Health students, which was held at the Gales Point Community Center and addressed topics such as dental hygiene, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. Community members also had the opportunity to have one-on-one discussions with health care providers about any individual health concerns. The health fair allowed members of the community to enhance their understanding of health related issues, and, in return, students were able to test their knowledge and address community concerns in an open, supportive environment.



### Nursing and Dental Hygiene

The Belize medical team consists of students in the disciplines of nursing and dental hygiene and faculty in dentistry, dental hygiene, and medicine. The purpose of this team is to enhance the quality of life for the people of Gales Point by providing them with responsible, safe and ethical medical and dental care. During the 2010 visit, 138 patients received medical evaluation and treatment. We said we would keep our promise and we did. To return annually and provide services. The ongoing nature of the program over the last ten years has assured the continuity of the medical and dental care provided to the community. Students in the medical team learned about rural healthcare and were challenged to integrate into their practice critical



thinking skills related to cultural appreciation and human diversity. Students were able to provide some health education as well during a trip to the Gales Point Government School.



#### Interdisciplinary Education

One of the unique aspects of the WKU IMPACT program is the interdisciplinary educational opportunity provided to the students. During the program, each student is given the opportunity to participate in a discipline other than his or her own. This exercise allows students to become actively involved in an unfamiliar profession and gain insight into its methods and how that profession may compliment their own field of study.

#### Faculty Mentoring and Reflection

Reflective learning is a key part of the IMPACT program. Students keep a journal where they record what they have learned, how it has made them feel, and ways that they could improve. Group reflection sessions are held several times during the program. Students and faculty share their experiences, discuss cultural differences, and attempt to develop a deeper understanding of the community. There are many opportunities for faculty to mentor students either individually or in small group settings. Students enjoy “dock time”, informal reflective sessions on the dock at Manatee Lodge in which students and faculty share insights into their experiences, community problems, and personal life goals. Dock time started spontaneously but has become one of the hallmarks of the program. It gives students a chance to reflect on what they have learned in a safe environment and facilitates the strengthening of the faculty-student relationship. In the past, many of these mentoring relationships have continued beyond the IMPACT program.



#### IMPACT Scholars Program – Faculty Development

The Scholars Program is a faculty development initiative created in response to the need for faculty leadership in the internationalization of Western Kentucky University. It is designed to create a group of international specialists who are capable of teaching, leading, and serving in international, interdisciplinary, service learning settings. Few faculty members come to the university with extensive international backgrounds, therefore it is imperative that the university develop faculty with these skills. Any faculty member wishing to teach in the IMPACT program is first required to participate in the program as a scholar. In 2010, Dr. Molly Kerby from the Women’s Studies program was an IMPACT Scholar. Dr. Kerby learned about the program and explored options for leading a Women’s Studies group in 2011. The addition of Women’s Studies will add a new dimension to the IMPACT program and will facilitate a deeper understanding of the Gales Point community.

### Cultural Opportunities

IMPACT program participants spend the majority of their time working in the clinic, providing environmental services, and participating in community education. However, the service learning program is not purely academic. Excursions and cultural activities are also included in the program each year. Past excursions have included snorkeling, visiting Mayan ruins, exploring caves, visiting the U.S. embassy in Belmopan, fishing, and adventuring in the local rivers. Participants can even view manatee by taking a boat trip in the Southern Lagoon. Opportunities vary each year depending on the length of the program and costs of activities and transportation, as well as the weather.

There are many opportunities for students to learn about the culture of Gales Point. Students are taught to play African drums by local Master Drummer Emmeth Young, one of the most accomplished African drummers in the world. Creole lessons are offered for those wishing to learn common words and phrases. Participants observe women in the village cooking on open hearths and making baskets. The culminating cultural experience is the Sambai, the traditional fertility dance in which students are invited to participate. Such participation in the social and cultural life of the community allows students and faculty to direct their service focus accordingly, taking culture into consideration when setting goals and developing objectives for the program.



### **\$100 Solution**

An ongoing program in the village of Gales Point is the implementation of the \$100 Solution. This program has given students the opportunity to have an immediate impact on the lives of countless individuals in the community. In 2010, students identified three \$100 Solution projects.

*“Drums Speak Louder than Guns”*

Group: Molly Calico, Rachel Cusick, Jill Norris, Jordan Norris, Rachel Sither, Linwood Strenecky

*Gun violence has increased in Belize, particularly among young men. During our visit to Belize, we discovered that the violence has even impacted the remote village of Gales Point, as two brothers from Gales Point were killed as a result of gun violence in Belize City. Master Drummer Emmeth Young and his wife, Jill Burgess, have started Drums Not Guns in an effort to help the youth of Gales Point reconnect with their traditions and to provide them with positive outlets for their energy. Emmeth and Jill hope that youth involvement in Drums Not Guns will prevent future violence. To kick-start this program, Emmeth held a drum-making workshop for the youth. The group will provide money for the purchase of rope, his most costly expense when making drums. The group decided to send a money order along with a letter stating how the money was to be used. It is our hope that this contribution will help the Drums Not Guns program reach more youth in the community.*

*“Waste Management and Recycling”*

Group: Breeze King, Wendi King, Laura Payne, Heather Rasmusson, Jody Thompson

*Gales Point lacks waste management and recycling services. The community has made efforts to implement various community clean-ups without much success due to the unavailability of disposal resources. Many members of the community welcomed this proposal for a \$100 Solution project. After much discussion with the community members and the Ministry of Health it was determined that, a dinner meeting between active members of the community and members of the Ministry of Health was needed and that \$100 would be sufficient to facilitate this meeting. Because of the impracticality of bringing the parties together on more than one occasion, it was decided to combine different issues related to waste management into the meeting’s agendas. Points to be discussed include community recycling and waste management, septic system feasibility, funding, and management, and water treatment issues. The funds for the meeting between the Ministry of Health and the Community leaders were left with Mr. Bailey at Manatee Lodge. Manatee Lodge will host the meeting between the two groups. Since returning to the US, Impact has been in contact with Mr. Anthony Flowers at the Ministry of Health to confirm that the Ministry is committed to this meeting.*

*“Mobile Health Unit Awareness”*

Group: Mary Beth Wimsatt, Rasmi Nair, Sarah Burton, Michelle Allison, Elizabeth Ralph, Amanda Smith Gaspar

*In past years, the IMPACT medical clinic has supplied all patients in the community with enough medication to last them one year. This year, after discussion with the Ministry of Health, it was decided that the community would start receiving their medications via the mobile health unit which visits Gales Point every three months. This unit is sent by the government to communities like Gales Point in order to provide regular medical service throughout the year. After talking with many people in the community, it was observed that many people did not know about the mobile health clinic, or were not interested in using this service. The mobile health unit service would be very beneficial to the community because it would increase their access to healthcare. The group decided to use their \$100 to advertise the mobile health unit so that the community would be aware of the services they provided. The \$100 dollars was*

*given to the Ministry of Health to sponsor an information night in the community about the mobile health unit. This information night will introduce the healthcare professionals who will be on the unit, as well as provide information on the types of services the unit provides. It is anticipated that this information night will increase awareness and utilization of the mobile health unit.*

## **The Future IMPACT**

Continuance of IMPACT Belize indefinitely into the future will require a sustainable commitment of faculty, support, and vision. A goal of the program is that a Signature Donor will select to have an impact on generations of WKU students and communities in need of service throughout the world by supporting IMPACT Belize.

### Sustainability

IMPACT Belize embodies the motto of WKU, “A Leading American University with International Reach”. In creating student and faculty international service learning scholars, the program is engaging WKU as a leading American University with International Reach. Likewise, this program fulfills the vision and mission of the College of Health and Human Services by offering an exemplary program in health and human services, and by providing a diverse educational opportunity for a global community.

International programs are, by nature, complex. The complexity is increased when the goal of the program becomes to engage faculty and students in service learning and in an international setting. As such, international service learning programs require a designated program director, dedicated faculty, supporting student assistants, and engaged students.

**Program Director** - In order for IMPACT Belize to attain sustainability, funding is needed to create a permanent position of program director. A faculty member would serve as director, with time committed via funding. The funded director would oversee program development, planning, service, research, and budgeting. Creating a fully funded director position would ensure that IMPACT Belize has sustainable leadership.

**Faculty** – The faculty and staff that serve the IMPACT program are vital to the sustainability of the program. These individuals give of their time, resources, and life to the students, communities, and each other. Without their dedication the IMPACT program would not exist. In recognition of their invaluable service, the IMPACT program is working to develop a schedule of release time for faculty and staff. As the program grows, a dedicated director and support faculty will be necessary to sustain the initiative. Participation in the IMPACT program is a very time consuming process for any faculty member, requiring designated workload time.



To continue to support dedicated faculty, funding is needed to provide stipends. Stipends would ensure qualified faculty for each service learning opportunity. In addition, stipends would provide

opportunities for faculty to attend conferences and meetings to share information, attain professional development, and enhance international service learning for students.

**Graduate Assistants** – In the past five years the IMPACT Belize program has depended on the service of graduate assistants to be a reality. Students accomplish daily logistics, planning, and conduct research. A vital component is the continuous feedback and communication that graduate assistants are able to give to students and participating. Funded graduate assistants serve as ambassadors for the program and develop critical leadership skills for their future professional careers.

**Scholarships** – The most critical issue for most students that desire to be a part of IMPACT Belize is funding. This is a very personal matter for many students. Some must decide to take out loans to participate. Others must decide not to have the experience because it would put their family in financial jeopardy. It is one of the greatest desires of the faculty to have funding to provide scholarships to students that have the highest qualifications, yet, due to finances, would not be able to have the IMPACT experience. A related goal is that a student's finances will not be the determining factor for participation. Funding of scholarships would create a program that is free from the constraints facing most international programs. Student scholarships are the single most important funding item for IMPACT Belize. As a requirement of all scholarships, students would participate in local service learning by assisting with the WKU legacy project, impacting the world in our own community. Without student scholarships IMPACT Belize is at risk of becoming just another study abroad program.

**Infrastructure** – Physical space has not been dedicated for the program, at this point. To create a sustainable program, IMPACT Belize would require a program office. The office would house the director, graduate assistants, and resources of the program. In addition, the long-term vision for IMPACT Belize is to provide opportunities for international service learning teaching, exchange, internships, and research. To fulfill this vision a dedicated smart classroom is needed to facilitate these opportunities. Such a classroom would provide students in the program with resources to continue and develop research and service that has a global impact. Additionally, a classroom would provide space that the students would identify with the program, thus fostering interdisciplinary collaboration.

**Scholars in Residence** – In order for IMPACT Belize to truly empower international communities, scholars should be developed that can carry forward the mission of the program. It is a reality that the IMPACT Belize program is in country for a limited period of time. However, by developing resident scholars in Belize, the program becomes sustainable for an indefinite period of times. Scholars would come to WKU, be trained, and then required to return to Belize and provide service to rural communities in need. This international scholar program is currently a dream, however, funding would make this a reality.

**Scholars Program** – Each year at least one new faculty member joins the IMPACT program as a scholar. The Scholars Program is vital to train, develop, and encourage WKU faculty to embrace international service learning as a vital model for teaching, service, and research. By developing additional scholars the IMPACT model can be shared beyond Belize and have a global influence.

**International Service Learning Scholar Ceremony** – Beginning in 2011, depending on funding, the faculty desire to institute this ceremony to honor the students that participate, recognize milestones in the program, award sacrificial service, and recognize supporters. Without such a celebration the program is inadequate.



## Program Funding and Scholarships

A primary need of the IMPACT Belize program is to establish permanent and sustainable funding. The future of IMPACT is dependent upon this need. A signature donation would provide such a funding mechanism and would perpetuate international service learning indefinitely in the WKU College of Health and Human Services. A signature donor will have the capacity to mold program to have an impact on generations of WKU students. An integral part of such a donation would be to establish an institute or center named by the donor that implements global interdisciplinary service learning focused on international health.

## International Legacy

In order for the program to continue to achieve greater milestones, funding mechanisms must be secured and sustained. Such funding would provide necessary equipment, such as compressors for conducting dental work. Although gifts of any size are greatly appreciated, the greatest challenge facing the program with regard to funding is the long-term viability. It is our greatest hope that faculty and students continue to have the opportunity to give back a portion of what they have been given, through global service learning. There is no greater calling in life than to give to others. To those ends, we are working to establish an endowment for global service learning. Such funding would allow faculty and students to focus solely on service to the community without being concerned with financial circumstances.



## **Conclusion**

The IMPACT program in Belize is one of the most unique educational programs in service learning in the country. Through this initiative, faculty and students are provided an opportunity to live and work in a remote Creole community in central Belize. The program employs a collaborative problem solving approach to address community needs. The elected community officials identify critical community needs



and WKU responds by establishing credit-bearing experiences that address these needs. Students have the opportunity to have interdisciplinary experiences and learn the importance of cultural competency. During the years that this program has been in operation, the program has created a comprehensive health and dental program, a water quality plan for a sustainable drinking water supply, and a public health education program. In the future, the IMPACT program will continue to pursue current initiatives while also expanding to include additional disciplines.

Thank you for taking the time to review our report.