The UAlbany Center for Global Health sponsors a unique opportunity for students to travel to the Dominican Republic over Spring Break to expand global public health understanding and provide community service. This faculty-led program is organized in conjunction with Community Service Alliance, a not-for-profit Dominican organization founded and run by a UAlbany School of Public Health alumnus and Axelrod Scholar. Participants will learn about Dominican history and culture, the nation’s health care system, and the non-governmental organization sector, while also having the opportunity to engage in meaningful service to others.

Program Details
Program participants will spend three days in the capital city of Santo Domingo to obtain an understanding of the Dominican health system through lectures by representatives from the Ministry of Health and various site visits. Participants will also learn about Dominican culture and spend time touring and learning about the history of the country.

The group will then spend four to five days implementing service learning projects in the rural, underserved communities located near the city of El Seibo in the interior of the country. This area is known for its sugar plantations and their remote “bateye communities” where the workers, who are primarily of Haitian decent, live. On the final full day of the program participants will spend time relaxing on one of this island nation’s beautiful beaches.

The program participants’ service learning projects will focus on basic needs such as promoting safe water, hygiene, improved sanitation, nutrition, and youth empowerment. Previous projects have included installation and training on use of biosand water filtration systems, planting of community gardens, health education, improved nutrition, and building of latrines in low-income communities. While some knowledge of Spanish is helpful, there is no language requirement to participate. A willingness to engage in physical labor is a must.

Please note: Students have the option of completing this program for one undergraduate service learning credit. To earn this academic credit, in-country active participation is required. While in the field, experiential learning and reflection will take place everyday. This option is open to students in all majors with a second-semester freshman standing or above who are in good academic and judicial standing (click here to learn more).

To find out more about this unique learning experience, please visit the Center for Global Health’s website to view three short videos taken during a recent service learning trips to the DR via this link (http://www.albany.edu/globalhealth/service-learning.php#DR). You can also contact John Justino (jjustino@albany.edu) or Carol Whittaker (cwhittaker@albany.edu) directly.

Expand your horizons and your public health knowledge. Provide meaningful and needed service. Work on your language skills. Meet new people. Have some fun in the sun!