

University Volunteer Program Update

By Seher Syed

“The program offers the best opportunity for Talloires Network member institutions to contribute to building a better world through student’s commitment within a frame of south-south cooperation.”

Silvia Arias, Director, UAM’s Office for Solidarity and Cooperation

“By working hand-in-hand with local communities in new cultural contexts, we expect volunteers to improve their intercultural competencies and increase their international social capital; some may develop international career intentions.”

Lorlene Hoyt, Director of Programs and Research, Talloires Network



University Volunteer Program



The Talloires Network and the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM) launched the pilot year of the [University Volunteer Program](#) this summer. The idea for the program, funded by the Santander Group, evolved from high-level discussions at the Talloires Network Leaders Conference in Madrid, Spain in 2011. The aim of the University Volunteer Program is to instill global civic engagement, community building and partnerships amongst Talloires Network member institutions through the international exchange of student volunteers.

After careful consideration and emphasis on South-South exchange, twelve universities from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Spain were selected to participate in the pilot. Participating member institutions include Universidad Veracruzana, Universidad Señor de

Sipán, Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana Cali, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and Instituto Tecnológico Monterrey in Latin America; Kenyatta University, Ahfad University, and the University of South Africa in Africa and; Lingnan University and University of Hong Kong in Asia. Additionally, students from UAM will be volunteering in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The map above shows the inter-country exchange of volunteers within the participating universities.

As a result of the diversity in geographical sites and student interests, the volunteer assignments cover a wide range of critical issues in each community ranging from combating violence against women in Sudan, to training of health workers in South Africa and creating challenging art-based programs to develop creative skills amongst the youth in Puerto Rico.

Several students who are midway through their assignments have reported back about their exciting and rewarding experiences abroad. Ricardo Alberto Jaime Uceda, from Univ. Señor de Sipán (Peru) is currently working on social initiatives at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Ricardo explains in his midyear report that the leadership and support provided by his hosting university in promoting social responsibility has been admirable. He states, “from my experience during the last three months, I have acquired valuable information and skills that will be very useful for my future work as a volunteer.”

All ten of the volunteers on active assignment are also connected through social media, including Facebook, where they are sharing their volunteer experiences and exchanging ideas to promote civic engagement and social responsibility in their respective communities.