Fall 2019 brought the very first of hopefully many more study abroad trips for the School of Social Work. Professors Tracy Orwig and Dr. Eusebius Small took 16 Social work students, both BSW and MSW, and embarked on a 2 week once in a lifetime journey. While in Belize, not only did they learn about health conditions, but they also embraced the culture that surrounded them. For some it was their very first time out of the country and for others it was their first study abroad trip.

BSW and MSW students pose with their professors at the entrance to the Mayan temple ruins.

A trip of firsts

"In Belize, as a part of the UTA Social Work Study abroad, we grew stronger as individuals, as a group, as social workers, and as global citizens."

"The trip was outstanding. Challenging. Truly the most rewarding experience I've ever encountered. Being able to compare true life in Belize to the tourism life was something I will forever treasure. From our outstanding local Mayan guides who encouraged us to jungle through like jaguars and hang from vines like howler monkeys to the empowering rush of adrenaline from the jump of a waterfall. Truly an out of body experience I'll genuinely cherish for the rest of my life. Dancing alongside one another in a local Indian Mayan Women's Village was just another mind-wakening experience we participated in together. And lastly, I'm an online MSW student who knew absolutely no one. I met my colleagues on this trip and I can honestly say this trip was so heart wrenching and soul touching."

"It was such a blessing to go on a social work study abroad. To be with social workers while experiencing a new culture brings well-rounded observations to the new things that we saw and experienced. I'm confident in knowing that after having that experience, it will help me bring more effective approaches to the way I view and support clients in their cultures. It has helped me become more culturally competent and a more understanding individual. I've come to realize that no matter how badly you may want to help a client, that they are a person-in-environment with their own culture, experience, and understandings. We cannot expect them to change who they are, even if it may be a better way of doing things. As social workers, it is our responsibility to be competent enough to come up with creative solutions that coincide with other cultures. I will be forever grateful for this experience."

"Cross-cultural study opened my eyes to my own beliefs and values, challenged them, changed some, and made others stronger. I saw, heard, and discussed things that truly matter to me. I learned more about who I am while remaining open to others at the same time. I look forward to continuing to build relationships with those I traveled with as well as those I met in Belize. I'm extremely grateful for the experience."

"Studying abroad in Belize helped me realize my gifts and encouraged me to use them to the best of my ability. It rekindled a fire in me to chase my dreams. I feel even more certain that I've chosen the right educational/career path for me."

"Studying abroad in Belize has taught me to appreciate things that I have taken for granted, luxuries I didn't even know were luxuries. I am blessed to have the opportunity for this experience. I've seen humanity and I've seen the wonders that God created. I will be going home changed."

In the end, the students are made more culturally competent and more skilled as social workers. They are able to better serve their clients and the communities they serve. The experience provides them with new ideas and perspectives that they can use in their work. It also provides them with a deeper understanding of the world and its diverse cultures. It is a way for them to grow as professionals and individuals. It is an opportunity to learn about other cultures, to gain a better understanding of the world, and to become more culturally competent. It is an opportunity to learn about other cultures, to gain a better understanding of the world, and to become more culturally competent. It is an opportunity to learn about other cultures, to gain a better understanding of the world, and to become more culturally competent.