"A framework for a bilateral partnership in tropical disease research: reflections from undergraduate student fieldwork with Chagas disease."

Dr. Claudia Herrera, Dr. Eric Dumonteil, Dr. Lorelei Cropley

Developing undergraduate student competencies in global health is one of the main directives of Tulane's public health program. To that end, a bilateral partnership was formed between Tulane and the Autonomous University of Yucatan, Mexico for students interested in collaborative tropical disease research, specifically Chagas Disease. Students participated in research activities that included intervention and control of the diseases, entomological surveillance and designing new vector control strategies using a combination of field work, and molecular epidemiology. Based on feedback from previous students and mentors, a framework for the bilateral partnerships was expanded to encompass training and mentorship both prior to and post the tropical disease research conducted in the Yucatan. This training was performed in the Laboratory of Molecular Epidemiology of Chagas disease in the Department of Tropical Medicine-SPHTM, and following their experience abroad, several students returned to this laboratory to develop their own research as part of the independent study program or participated in other research projects.