



All Things Ignatian



Institute for Latin American Concern (ILAC)

Mission: The ILAC Center in the Dominican Republic is an international, Christian, Ignatian-inspired, collaborative health care and educational organization that exists to promote the integral well-being and spiritual growth of all its participants. The ILAC Office at CU partners with the ILAC Center to organize and facilitate experiences for 550 participants in 25 high school, university, and surgical programs annually.



Goal: The ILAC Office programs strive to support the mission and vision of ILAC/CESI by emphasizing the importance of holistically educating participants to have a wider global vision, to become agents of change in their local communities, and to nurture their relationships with God, self, and others. ILAC educates U.S. participants by providing opportunities for them to build relationships and connections with Dominican community members, to learn about the Dominican reality and the reality of other developing countries, to work with and for communities in completing service projects, to receive generous hospitality, and to reflect and grow in their faith during spiritual reflections. ILAC participants learn and live the Jesuit values of “Men and Women For and With Others” and “Cura Personalis” in their experiences in the Dominican Republic. They bring these lessons back to the United States and are committed to living them in their personal and professional lives.

History: ILAC was founded in 1972 by two Jesuit priests, Fr. Ernesto Travieso, S.J. and Fr. Narciso Sanchez, S.J. as a way to conscientize Jesuit seminarians by exposing them to the reality of people living in developing countries. Fr. Travieso was transferred to Creighton in 1975 to be the chaplain of the Medical School. Soon after, Creighton began to send health science students and professionals to deliver health care on a personal and intimate level to rural farmers. In 1982, ILAC started to work with community-selected health promoters who received six weeks of health care

training in Santiago and then were charged with returning to their communities as invaluable resource persons. The health promoters have played and continue to play an integral role in ILAC’s programs. Currently, there are approximately 170 health promoters in 135 communities in the Dominican Republic. Since the 80’s, the ILAC Center, an independent Dominican non-profit organization, has grown tremendously and now has four different programs in organic agriculture, water, health, and education for children and adults.



High School Programs:

Eight high schools from around the United States participate in programs through ILAC. They learn about various human rights and social justice issues throughout their trip. The highlight for the students is a home stay with a Dominican family in a rural community where they also complete a service project such as building latrines, painting schools, or laying cement floors. In 2010, they painted and repaired two schools, constructed 57 latrines, and poured six cement floors.



CU Programs: CU programs include educational tours, language study, spiritual reflections, home stays with families, and opportunities for students to use their gifts and talents in the service of rural Dominicans. In 2010, the CU groups did the following:

Summer Health Care Program. Seventy-two students and 30 professionals provided health care for over 3,000 patients in five weeks.

Occupational Therapy Program. Seven OT students and professionals saw 48 patients and educated 74 health promoters in three weeks.

Physical Therapy Program. Forty-one PT students and professionals had over 1,100 contacts with patients and provided 27 educational talks in a month-long rotation.

Law Program. The group painted the ILAC Clinic in Arroyo del Torro and visited the Dominican-Haitian border and the Supreme Court.

Water Quality Program. The group visited 23 communities and inspected 441 water filters and performed microbial analyses of water from 367 filters and 21 source waters during three weeks.

Elective OB/GYN Rotation. The students and professionals worked at a hospital providing relief assistance for Haitian earthquake victims and evaluated 296 patients during five Women’s Health Days.



Surgical Programs:

ILAC facilitates trips for 8 medical and surgical teams that spend a week screening patients, performing surgeries, training local Dominican doctors and medical students, and performing follow-up with their patients at the state-of-the-art ILAC surgical center on the ILAC grounds. The different teams serve a diverse set of needs, including hernia, eye, and orthopedic patients as well as patients with ear, nose, and throat problems. In 2010, the teams provided 475 surgeries and 1, 650 evaluations.