Spring 2018, UNH Students Conduct J-Term Field Research Across the Globe

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What if there were a social business model that solved multiple problems of food security, employment and women’s empowerment all at the same time? And what if UNH students had a front seat to all of this vital development work and were even active participants in making it happen?

The Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise (https://www.unh.edu/social-innovation) (CSIE), a joint program of the Paul College of Business and Economic and the Carsey School of Public Policy, answers these questions through a unique and multifaceted program called the Social Sector Franchise Initiative (SSFI). Social Sector Franchising harnesses business-format franchising, one of the most popular business models (think Subway or Dunkin Donuts) to reach large numbers of customers with goods and services, to fulfill market and social needs. SSF businesses are represented in healthcare, clean water and sanitation, clean energy, education and other markets. UNH’s SSFI is working with five social enterprises that use the franchising business model to serve communities from India to Africa to Latin America. Through a
partnership with the International Franchise Association we are providing expert level mentoring to these businesses with the goal to accelerate their growth so they can scale up to serve thousands, tens of thousands or even millions of customers.

So where do UNH students come in? UNH Student Research Fellows are assigned to specific SSFI mentor and protégé teams. The fellows monitor monthly calls and compose blog posts for the web then have an opportunity to visit social franchises in the field during J-Term to conduct in depth research. The fellows follow up their visit by writing descriptive case studies and contribute to the writing of a full-length case study about their assigned social sector franchise documenting progress made in scaling up the business.

**MEET THE SSFI STUDENT RESEARCH FELLOWS**

**Yusi Wang Turell** is a Ph.D. Candidate whose dissertation explores how social entrepreneurs affect public policies that, in turn, help their market-based social innovations to reach scale. Yusi is providing research support to Pollinate Energy (https://www.unh.edu/social-innovation/pollinate-energy), a company based in India that brings highly affordable, quality products such as cook stoves, solar lamps, fans, and water filters to the urban slums of India through a micro-franchise model. Pollinate uses door-to-door salespeople, or “Pollinators” to increase access to needed products, knowledge, social justice, and financial opportunity. Yusi visited Bangalore, Lucknow, Kanpur, Agra and New Delhi, walking the crowded streets with Pollinators watching how they ply their trade as clean energy saleswomen. Read Yusi’s blog posts (https://medium.com/@pollinateenergy/blog-4-no-night-should-go-without-light-ef6de314e3d2).

**Ana Alejandro** is pursuing her Master’s of Social Work at UNH. She is a veteran of the United States Navy and a native of Uruguay. As a native Spanish speaker, Ana’s visit to Managua, Nicaragua to visit the social franchise Mercado Fresco (https://www.unh.edu/social-innovation/ssfi/lcsa/supplyhope),
was invaluable. Mercado Fresco makes quality, affordable food accessible to low-income communities in stores located in the homes of women micro-franchise operators. Products include fresh dairy products, vegetables, bread and traditional foods such as rice, beans and nacatamales. Mercado Fresco teaches operators everything from proper food handling, customer service and money management. Ana had a chance to meet the franchisees who run the small stores, attend team meetings and talk to customers as they shopped. Read about Ana’s trip (https://medium.com/@mercadofresco/post-4-student-field-research-trip-1edfed083d16).

**Chelsea Evankow** is a senior double Biology and Women’s Studies major with a minor in Africana and African Studies. She is supporting the social franchise Wessex Social Ventures (WSV (https://www.unh.edu/social-innovation/ssfi/lcsa/wessex)) in Uganda that uses a “business in a box” microfranchising model. WSV works with local NGOs to create locally-owned solar lamp distribution and battery charging services. They also support the development of microenterprises which make and sell sanitary towels at 10% the cost of commercial alternatives and deliver free education on menstruation in schools, churches and community groups. It supplies schools with clean Eco-San toilets, giving the children and staff a, safe, discreet, sanitary environment. Chelsea learned about the interesting and somewhat complex WSV model interviewing staff, customer and community members during her week in the field. Read Chelsea’s trip blog post (https://medium.com/@wsv/post-4-student-field-visit-80cfea7667ca).
Gina Occhipinti is a senior at the Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics, pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Economics and a minor in French. Gina is assigned to the social franchise Apps and Girls (https://www.unh.edu/social-innovation/ssfi/lcsa/appsgirls) based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Apps and Girls seeks to bridge the tech gender gap by providing quality coding training (web programming, mobile app development, game development, and robotics) and entrepreneurship skills to girls in secondary schools via coding clubs as well as to university level students. Apps and Girls also organizes holiday events such as hackathons, boot camps, and competitions and provides internship opportunities. Gina was able to see coding training sessions in progress and meet with the girls and their mentors at several locations in the coastal seaport of Dar es Salaam. Read Gina’s trip blog (https://medium.com/@appsandgirls/post-3-student-field-visit-77e493680e15).

Rachel Vaz is a Brazilian-American senior majoring in Business Administration with a concentration in International Business and Economics and a minor in Spanish and Latin American Studies. She is passionate about social innovation especially in the area of social justice. Rachel was assigned to the social franchise Livelihood Basix (LBI) in the Dodoma region of central Tanzania. LBI provides solutions for smallholder farmers, women, and youth by addressing issues of agriculture development, financial inclusion, and vocational skills. Rachel met with sunflower
farmers, franchisees, government officials and community members while conducting research in Tanzania. Read Rachel's trip blog (https://medium.com/@Basix/post-5-field-research-trip-8c48053c54a0).

The SSFI is a multi-faceted program of action research, student engagement, entrepreneurial development, making life-changing social impact on the lives of thousands of people at the bottom of the economic pyramid while developing UNH students’ skills and international experience. We are very grateful to the Peter T. Paul Fund for Innovation at the Paul College of Business and Economics and the Collaborative Research Excellence Initiative (CoRE), a project of the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Senior Vice Provost for Research for underwriting the SSFI and making this powerful student research opportunity possible.

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