

Student Summer Program

2019

Mexico City, Mexico



IslaUrbana

www.islaurbana.org

#RainForAll #VolunteerTourism

Introduction

Thank you so much for your support to Isla Urbana's Student Summer Program! This was our 4th year successfully running the program and we couldn't be happier with the results that came about with YOUR help!

We have long believed that there was a unique opportunity for student leaders to engage with our communities proactively through our work here in Mexico City. Today's youth show great motivation in making a difference for causes they care for on both a global and local scale. The world water crisis is a problem in particular in which our youth show great interest in. Isla Urbana in Mexico City provides them a unique opportunity to see the water crisis up close with an experienced team that offers solutions through rainwater harvesting. The overarching goal of our Student Summer Program is to offer an empowering week for them to further ignite their capacity for impact through the lens of our work. This is done with an emphasis on providing a broader perspective of Mexican culture through varied activities that include visits to tourist and historical locations.

In these next pages, you will see how the students fundraised to cover their costs in Mexico City, bring clean water to schools and the exciting experiences that followed them throughout the week. Take a look!



Before any of the students make it to Mexico City, they must first fundraise for the costs as well as for funds towards rainwater harvesting systems for schools. That experience can be daunting for many who have never done this before. While Isla Urbana staff is on hand to provide letters of support, fundraising tools and tips along the way, we have found that when schools, parents and others support their efforts, students are most likely to succeed and get to their goal. In fact, many surpass it!

This year, our High School students from the Junior World Affairs Council in Dallas were also joined by student mentors from the University of Pennsylvania. Both groups worked hard to fundraise to make the trip a reality. We are incredibly proud of all of them!

Meet Samira Mehta, the Student Who's Changing How We Think About Water at Penn

The sophomore reflects on her long history with Isla Urbana and the urgency of water scarcity issues around the world.



Isla Urbana PENN club founder featured on University paper
<https://www.34st.com/article/2019/04/samira-mehta-isa-urbana-penn-water-scarcity-ego>



Isla Urbana at PENN is the very first Isla Urbana University club in the U.S. (<https://islaurbanapenn.weebly.com>). The club was started by Samira Mehta, an alumni of our summer program who participated in the program for 2 years before graduating High School. This year, Samira and founding students organized their very first walk for water which ended at an ice skating rink. Collective efforts brought the students to a total of \$7,500 in fundraising efforts. That was \$2,500 over their original goal!

Sponsored in part by:



Every year, Northhills Prep High School led by teacher, Mr. Butler organize Agua Unida, an event that sends two students to participate in our program. One of the activities is a t-shirt design competition which also helps to raise funds through the selling of the winning shirts at the event. Because of the efforts, \$3,000 was raised for Krishna Chandrasekhara and Sahas Chinni to be able to join us for the program. The students were chosen due to their interest and leadership skills.



Mr. Butler and students at Agua Unida event (<https://www.uplifteducation.org/>)

“The positivity of everyone on this trip was so amazing and everyone really inspired me. I can’t wait to go back and make a difference!”

- Rishab Pulugurta



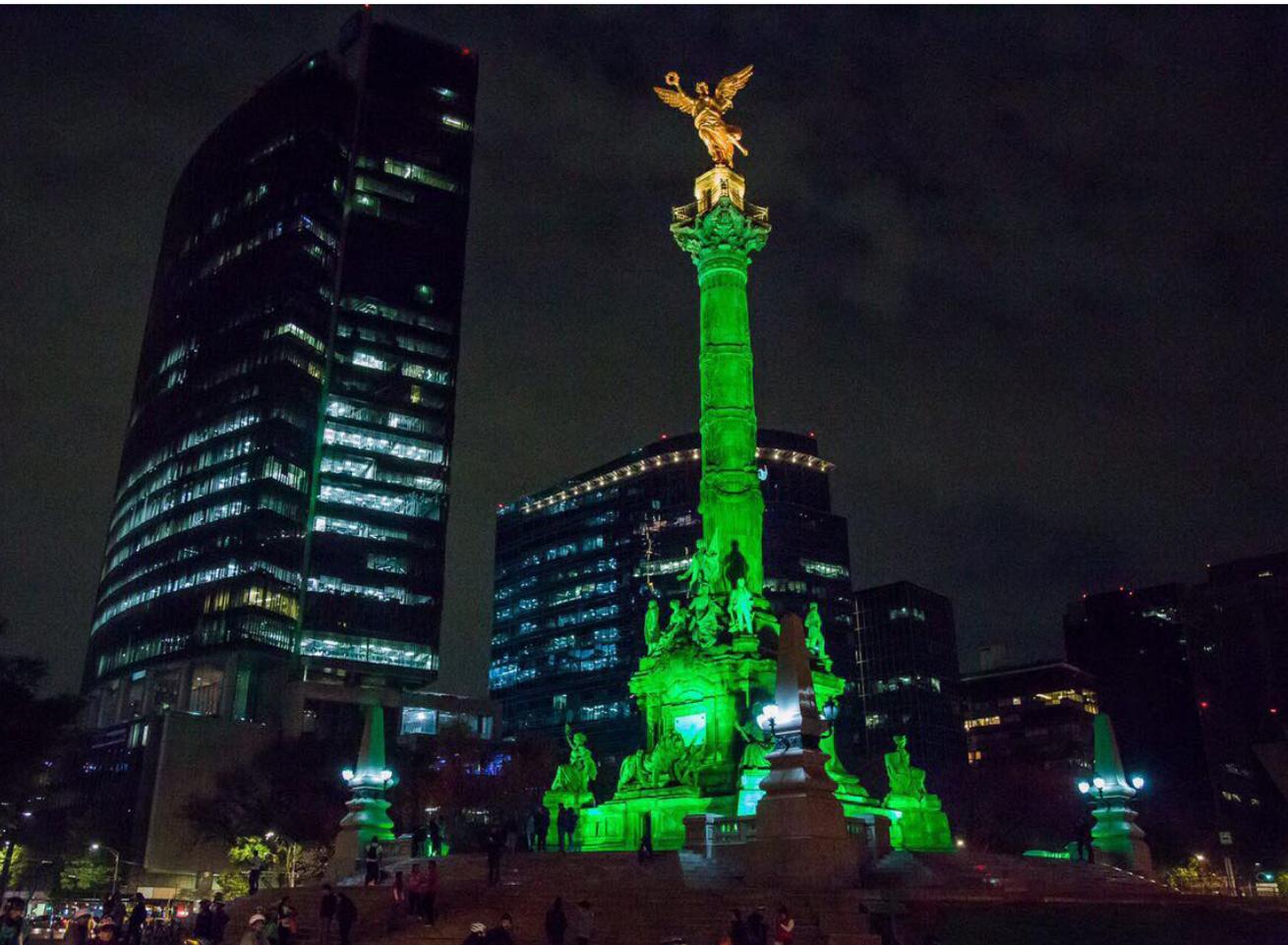
Additionally, Rishab from Coppell High School, Irving Texas heard of the program through a friend and decided to get moving. He held various fundraising activities with the support of his parents and friends. He not only raised the \$1,500 goal but he was also so motivated that he raised funds for next year’s deposit and plans to start a Isla Urbana club at his High School!

This year, our partner, the Junior World Affairs Council, Dallas sent us a new chaperone, Wendy Seeliger to support our High School students. Wendy has been a passionate Junior World Affairs Council sponsor for the past 12 years and she also won their International Educator of the Year Award this year. She was a perfect addition to the trip and supported our High School students while traveling with them on their flights and in the duration of their time in Mexico City. She was quick to jump in for whatever was needed and soon became a new friend to Isla Urbana!



“I highly respect what you all do and appreciate the opportunity to see the finished product in action. I would very much so recommend this program. No questions asked”. -

Wendy Seeliger,
teacher and chaperone



The Trip

On June 23rd, students Imania Powers, Olivia Wedig, Rishab Pulugurta, Krishna Chandrasekhara, Sahas Chinni, Wanqi Fang, Samira Mehta and teacher Wendy Seeliger arrived in Mexico City. Activities kicked off early the next day!



One of the key activities during the trip include the hands on experience of installing a rainwater harvesting system. Each year, students arrive anxious to see how this eco technology works. The experience takes them into a community that we work with on a day that includes a meal prepared by the community for the group, a tour of the surroundings and background of the community and its members. This is presented to them by community leaders before the start of the installation itself. During the day, they are encouraged to interact with members and ask questions.



“With the installation. I was able to get a much better understanding of how the systems work, to the point where I now feel comfortable explaining that process to others that are interested”

- Olivia Wedig





“We better understood the work by actually installing the system, hearing firsthand by the community how the systems are used and improve their water situation and talking to the co-founders and employees of Isla Urbana about what they do and why”

- Imania Powers





“The most valuable thing that I learned was that in the face of all the news about climate change and in particular water scarcity, there actually are real sustainable, affordable solutions that people all over the world are working hard to implement for communities in need”.

- Olivia Wedig

The day after our students installed the system, they visited a school in the same neighborhood. CAM 69 is a school that services special needs children which our students provided clean water to through their fundraising efforts. Our students received a very warm welcome and had the opportunity to meet the students, ask questions, get a tour of the school and the system and also eat a traditional snack made by students in their cooking class. After the school principal gave our group a tour and explanation of the system, they were presented at a rally to the school where CAM 69 students went on to proudly present our group sustainability projects they have been working on in class.





“It was very helpful to have a combination of actually installing the system along with visiting the school because it broadened our view and gave us firsthand experiences.”

- Rishab Pulugurta



The week included much sightseeing! Students kick off their trip while going to the pyramids of Teotihuacan to get some history and background on Mexico. They also visited El Monumento de la Revolución, Frida Kahlo's Casa Azul, Coyacan's markets, attended a folklorico show at Bellas Artes, toured the Zocalo, parque Alameda, enjoyed many delicious meals and visited the Huerto Roma Verde an outdoor community center focused on sustainability and socio environmental activities.

"The activities were very eye opening, fun, adventurous and the food was delicious!"

- Sahas Chinni





“The activities helped me understand the culture better and truly expand my worldview as a whole”
- Krishna Chandrasekhara



Before closing the trip, students participated in a workshop with Isla Urbana where they learned more about us, heard from our multidisciplinary staff, how to grow in their leadership capacity, volunteer and fundraising skills and were presented to by Samira and Pallavi as to their journey in starting a Isla Urbana chapter at UPENN.

“I enjoyed coming to visit the offices and hearing about the inception of Isla Urbana as well as what everyone is doing to help.”

- Wanqi Fang



After covering their costs, **the students raised \$6,500** solely **for rainwater harvesting systems.**

Additionally, the program also had a **match pledge from Briggs Equipment for \$5,000**, a **donation from Pacific Council on International Policy for \$1,000** and **other donations adding up to \$1,000!**

That is a total of \$13,500 for rainwater harvesting systems through our 2019 program.

Of which **two schools have been installed** (CAM 69 in Quiltepec, a special needs school **servicing 200 students** and Secundaria Diurna 287, Iztapalapa a secondary school **servicing 800 students**).

The remainder will help to co-fund another school in the near future. News that their efforts surpassed the original goal is incredibly motivating for all of the students.



We cannot thank you enough for the support you provided to the students and our program as a whole. Every teacher, every staff member, each and every individual donor, sponsor and supporter makes this possible. **Thank you for believing in our work and in the student's efforts. It means so much to so many. We look forward to what we can accomplish through next year's program and appreciate your continued support.**

Sol Garcia and Isla Urbana Team

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“The most valuable thing I took away was how Isla Urbana's rainwater harvesting work has truly brought sustainability throughout communities.... I would definitely recommend this program. It was very fun and I got to learn a lot about Isla Urbana, the water situation and Mexican culture” -Krishna Chandrasekhara

Thanks to!

