

Kristal Sawatzke



Before traveling to Trinidad and Tobago, when hearing the word “lime,” my mind immediately visualized a fruit, not a group of people spending time together. To “lime” is a common occurrence in Trinidad and Tobago in which groups of family, friends, or strangers visit with one another in a social setting. This concept, among countless others, provided invaluable insight into the unique experience of a Caribbean University student and the importance culture plays in to the types of student support services available. Completing a practicum in at the University of the West Indies in St. Augustine, Trinidad informed my perspective of Caribbean student services in an incredibly meaningful and impactful manner. Through conducting informational interviews across campus with professional staff, I gained an understanding of the types of programs offered to students and was able to share recommendations based on my knowledge of the field. While there, I visited with students and staff in the offices of Study Abroad, Accommodations (similar to Residence Life), Admissions, Campus Recreation, Orientation, Career Center, Alumni Relations, among others. Additionally, I met with the Dean of the School of Education in order to gain a faculty perspective on Caribbean student affairs and compiled a comprehensive evaluation based on observations, informational interviewing, and recommendations.

Early on in my SAHE journey, I was certain an international practicum would enhance my knowledge and understanding of student experiences abroad. That being said, the process of securing a location, practicum experience, and solidifying all other details truly made my experience a positive and exciting one. Not only did I complete the experience with a fellow student affairs graduate student, Ardith Ferrogia, from Oregon State University, I was able to organize a homestay experience through a CSU doctoral student from Trinidad. Additionally, the Caribbean Tertiary Level Personnel Association (CTLPA) hosted their annual conference at the University of the West Indies, and we were able to assist with the conference logistical planning meetings. Our supervisor, Mr. Chandar Gupta Supersad served as the President elect this year, and professionals traveled from all over the Caribbean to attend, so we gained fabulous perspectives from Jamaica, Barbados, and other locations. The CTLPA is associated with ACPA, and we were also fortunate enough to meet Heidi Levigne, President of ACPA, Dr. Kathleen Kerr, Executive Director of ACPA, and three other administrators from the United States. Needless to say, by the end of the experience, we all enjoyed “liming” with our new Caribbean associates and learned an immeasurable amount about the importance of internationalizing student affairs.