



**Student Voice**

Volume 1. Issue 1

Mason Hutcheson, a graduate student in the IU School of Social Work, traveled to Croatia this summer as a Service Learning Assistant with Dr. Carmen Luca Sugawara to explore the role of civil society in promoting local development of countries in transition.



*Mason Hutcheson(extreme left) with his fellow students in Croatia*

Mason served as Dr. Carmen Luca Sugawara’s Service Learning Assistant (SLA) to assist her in developing SWK 600 – Social Work Practice in Post-War Communities, an international service learning course in which ten students went to Croatia to explore the role of civil society in promoting local development of countries in transition. As the ambassador within the School of Social Work on the project, Mason served as the point person for the IUPUI Office of Study Abroad, planned pre-departure orientation sessions, and maintained communication with the Croatian partners to enhance transparency, accountability, and performance of all parties involved in the project.



Dr. Luca Sugawara saw the SLA scholarship, which is funded through the Sam H. Jones Community Service Scholarship Program, as an opportunity to increase her capacity to offer a summer international service learning class. This course provided the unique opportunity for students to have first-hand experience in working with communities at war, developing organizational skills, and increasing their ability to work with others that are very different than themselves to impact a number of social issues in the community.

Upon returning to the United States and reflecting upon his experience, Mason said,“What I have learned as an SLA has revealed very concrete ways in which direct service to society can be related to a college education.

*Dr. Carmen Luca Sugawara*

By traveling to Croatia, students are learning a lot about social work practice in post-war communities. We anticipate sharing what resources we may have with each other and engaging in

mutually beneficial dialogue about how to improve social conditions resulting from ethnic conflict and oppression.”

Some of the knowledge and skills that Mason reports were enhanced as a direct result of serving as an SLA include the importance of personal relationships and face-to-face interactions; presentation skills; how to coordinate and organize tasks on a timeline; and understanding the importance of having partners in the host country to facilitate meetings, accommodations, service opportunities, and trip logistics. In the end, through his interactions with Dr. Luca Sugawara and his service as an SLA, Mason “found meaning in investing [his] life for the public good”.