



SENATOR PAUL SIMON

# SPOTLIGHT AWARDS

The award selection committee recognized three institutions for their outstanding accomplishments in specific areas of internationalization: SUNY Buffalo State, the University of Evansville, and Virginia Tech.





*SUNY Buffalo State's Rockwell Hall houses classrooms, the School of Arts and Humanities, the Art Conservation and Music departments, and the Performing Arts Center.*

Photo credit: SUNY Buffalo State.



# SUNY Buffalo State

## *Developing Globally Competent Educators at SUNY Buffalo State*

**C**hrystal Holmes-Smith never thought education abroad would be an option. “Traditional study abroad programs just weren’t feasible [as] an education major,” says Holmes-Smith, who graduated from SUNY Buffalo State in 2015 with a degree in elementary education. “Having to do service-learning and student teaching makes it difficult to spend a semester abroad.”

### **INFLUENCING FUTURE GENERATIONS**

The chance for Holmes-Smith to go abroad came about through SUNY Buffalo State’s International Professional Development Schools (IPDS) Consortium program in Santiago, Chile. While abroad, Holmes-Smith and her classmates spent 2 weeks learning Spanish and participating in cultural activities and another week working with Chilean teacher candidates to teach children English.

“My last day in the classroom was the most defining moment of the trip for me,” Holmes-Smith says. She worked one-on-one with a little girl who wanted to practice her English. They created sentences related to things that they had in common. At the end of class, the little girl asked to take a picture with Holmes-Smith and set it as the screensaver on her laptop. “On the way home, her teacher told me that this was a student who never participated,” Holmes-Smith says. “She usually seemed uninterested in class and never wanted to try speaking....I decided then that I [wanted] to teach abroad...[and] that I wanted to work with English language learners.”

Since that three-week experience through IPDS, Holmes-Smith has gone from being a teacher candidate who had never thought about traveling abroad to becoming a globally competent educator who has lived and worked in two different countries. She taught for a year in Honduras and served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Nicaragua. Now, as a fifth grade teacher in Harlem, New York, Holmes-Smith works with students with backgrounds from all over the world. “The IPDS experience...helped me become a better teacher

for English language learners and a more culturally responsive educator,” she says. “Having the chance to be a language learner myself helped me to learn strategies that make it easier for language learners to comprehend.”



Photo credit: SUNY Buffalo State.

Katherine Conway-Turner, president of SUNY Buffalo State.

## NAVIGATING DIVERSE CLASSROOMS

Holmes-Smith is one of more than 180 SUNY Buffalo State teacher candidates, along with 20 faculty members, who have participated in the IPDS program since it launched in Chile and Zambia in 2012. Since then, SUNY Buffalo State has established 45 partnerships in more than a dozen countries, including China, the Dominican Republic, England, Germany, Italy, Myanmar, and Rwanda. Additionally, discussions are currently underway to establish a partnership at the graduate level in Colombia. Each location is offered every other year to avoid competing for participants. Students who are unable to travel can participate in a virtual IPDS with a school in Honduras.

The IPDS program was born out of a need to prepare future teachers to work in increasingly diverse classrooms. SUNY Buffalo State faculty designed the program with a short-term travel component due to the difficulty of incorporating international experiences

into the curriculum of teacher education programs. “Teacher education is notoriously difficult to internationalize because of the prescriptive nature of the state agencies that give teacher certifications,” says Robert Summers, assistant provost for global engagement. SUNY Buffalo State has found the answer in IPDS.

## CENTERING ON INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING

Founded in 1871 as the “Buffalo Normal School,” SUNY Buffalo State’s School of Education is one of the oldest teacher colleges in New York state. A large influx of immigrants and refugees to the larger Buffalo area over the last 10 years has further increased the need for teacher candidates to develop global competence in order to better serve students with diverse cultural backgrounds.



Carmen Terrell, a math education undergraduate student, hanging out with her pupils in a Chilean classroom.

Photo credit: SUNY Buffalo State.





Photo credit: SUNY Buffalo State.

*The 2019 cohort of teacher candidates from SUNY Buffalo State taking Spanish at the ECELA Language School in Santiago, Chile.*

Ninety percent of the participants of the International Professional Development Schools program are women, and 25 percent identify as a member of an underrepresented group. “A large majority of our students are first-generation college students, and many have never traveled outside of the United States,” says professor Pixita del Prado Hill.

Students enroll in a course the semester prior to traveling to help prepare them for a three-week service-learning trip abroad in January or June. In addition to learning about the culture of their host country, students are asked to reflect on the language differences they might experience and how to adjust their teaching practices in classrooms where they might not have access to the same resources as they do in the United States.

## ESTABLISHING A LASTING IMPACT

IPDS students visit schools, observe classrooms, and work with mentor teachers. The Siena, Italy, site is the only site offering student teaching opportunities at an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. At other study destinations, the SUNY Buffalo State teacher candidates often prepare English language lessons and engage in informal conversations with students. In some locations, participants live with local families and have the opportunity to engage with non-profits in the community, further extending their cross-cultural exchanges.

Faculty at SUNY Buffalo State often remark that one of the most important elements of the IPDS program is helping teacher candidates understand what it is like to learn in a language that they might not understand. To support their work with local students, SUNY Buffalo





Photo credit: SUNY Buffalo State.

*The Anne Frank Project uses theater and drama-based education to focus on conflict resolution, community building, and identity exploration in schools in Rwanda and other countries.*

State students traveling to Chile and the Dominican Republic spend part of their time in-country taking an intensive Spanish class tailored to their own proficiency level. “One of the most important impacts is around language learning and supporting that experience in a very compassionate way when they come back,” says del Prado Hill.

The impact of the IPDS program has gone beyond the School of Education at SUNY Buffalo State. The Creative Studies Department, for instance, sponsors a trip to Yangon, Myanmar, during which students engage in an IPDS-supported project working with displaced Burmese children living at the Dha Maw Da Monastery School. Another example is the Anne Frank Project, which is facilitated by the SUNY Buffalo State Theater Department and implemented in various schools in Rwanda and Kenya. Participants apply drama-based education tools toward conflict resolution and teacher training.

Teacher candidates also participate in comparative education research while they are abroad. Students have completed projects on topics such as recess in different countries and comparisons of the use of native languages in IB schools in the United States and Italy. Upon return to Buffalo, the teacher candidates present their research findings to instructors and peers.

Music education major Kristine Murnieks worked with another student on a project looking at music as a tool for second language instruction, while studying in Torremaggiore, Italy. “We taught second grade students in English using a bilingual book we authored ahead of time,” says Murnieks, who graduated in 2018. “Collecting data for our research has really aided my understanding of pedagogical parallels for teaching language and music.”



## CARRYING OUT THE VISION OF FACULTY STAKEHOLDERS

The program's international partnerships are largely faculty driven and entail collaboration with universities and schools in the host locations. Once the initial connections are established by individual faculty members, other professors are brought in to help make the partnerships sustainable. These partnerships provide access to unique learning opportunities for SUNY Buffalo State's teacher candidates.

del Prado Hill developed the partnership with Universidad Mayor in Santiago while she completed a Fulbright fellowship to Chile in 2011. The leadership at SUNY Buffalo State and Universidad Mayor were strategic in identifying parameters to make the relationship reciprocal. Every other February, Universidad Mayor's teaching training program sends its students and faculty to Buffalo for 3 weeks, giving SUNY Buffalo

State students the opportunity to get to know Chilean students. del Prado Hill has also collaborated with Universidad Mayor faculty on a few projects. "They've contributed a chapter to a book that we're in the process of publishing," she says. "We also share resources and expertise."

For another pivotal partnership, professor Hibajene Shandomo was instrumental in setting up the International Professional Development Schools program in her native Zambia. She used her own networks to develop partnerships with the University of Zambia, local schools, and an orphanage. "What our teacher candidates see, what they experience in a day of visiting these schools and teaching these students, is equivalent to many, many hours of reading a book about other countries," Shandomo says.



Photo credit: SUNY Buffalo State.

Professor Pixita del Prado leading a group of students around Santa Lucia, Chile, in 2014.

