With D-SIGN Grants, Graduate Students Build Networks and Advance Research Interests

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Five groups led by Duke graduate students received Duke Support for Interdisciplinary Graduate Networks (D-SIGN) grants for the 2016-17 academic year, becoming the first cohort of students to make use of this new program from the Office of the Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies. D-SIGN’s purpose is to enable graduate students to build or extend their networks and to integrate collaborative, cross-school experiences into their programs, thereby increasing the number of individuals whose graduate training reflects Duke’s commitment to interdisciplinarity and knowledge in the service of society.

The D-SIGN grantees included students from the School of Nursing, Sanford School of Public Policy, Arts & Sciences and the Nicholas School of the Environment who advanced a range of research projects and educational experiences that reach beyond disciplinary lines. Here are brief summaries of the groups’ activities.

Global Alliance on Disability and Health Innovation (GANDHI) – Children and Adolescents Health Group

*Brittney Sullivan* (Ph.D. in Nursing ’17, School of Nursing) and *Anna Martin* (Master of Public Policy student, Sanford School of Public Policy), established a graduate network affiliated with the Bass Connections project Global Alliance on Disability and Health Innovation (https://bassconnections.duke.edu/project-teams/global-alliance-disability-and-health-innovation-gandhi-2016-2017) (GANDHI) but focused on young people rather than adults. Their faculty sponsor was Janet Prvu Bettger (Nursing).

They aimed to establish the evidence for improving systems of care for children and adolescents living with disability after an acute hospitalization. Using a socioecological approach to identify the key needs for children newly living with disability, network members set out to examine and compare the social supports, health and community services and policies in three countries.

The group held weekly meetings with guest speakers throughout the year, supplemented by four group dinners. Three members traveled to Uganda in April to conduct interviews and observe some of the organizations that the group identified.

Anna Martin and Nelia Ekeji ’19 presented "GIS Study of Posthospital Services Supporting Children with Surgical Need in Uganda" at a Duke event, Strategies to Strengthen Health Systems Globally (https://sites.duke.edu/bassgandhi/473-2/).

The group has a manuscript in preparation, "Spatial Distribution of Rehabilitation Services for Children Following Surgery in Uganda: Using the Data to Plan Interventions." Members are transcribing and coding interviews, and Sarah Barton (Th.D. student, Divinity School) will lead the group in 2017-18.