

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO KENYA

Newcomb Brings Women's Leadership Training to Girls in Nairobi



With its mission to educate undergraduate women for leadership in the 21st century, faculty, and staff at Newcomb College Institute are well aware of gender-based challenges facing women today. Through its latest service-learning initiative, the Institute seeks to connect students with an interest in women's leadership with girls in Kenya, where HIV/AIDS has left approximately one million orphans.

In 2015, Executive Director Sally J. Kenney and Assistant Director for Student Leadership and Engagement Malliron Hodge traveled to the African nation to teach sessions on gender and leadership to teens at Ngong Road Children's Association Camp. The camp, organized during the summer school holiday, provides education and support for Nairobi children living in poverty whose families are affected by HIV/AIDS. While there, the two laid the groundwork for a study abroad service-learning opportunity that would connect Tulane students interested in gender equality with hundreds of young girls eager to learn more.

Building on this foundation, this summer Kenney and Professor of International Development Izabela Steflja returned with several undergraduates to continue their work. As a prerequisite, each student learned about their host country and developed an individual project in the course, "Women and Social Development in Kenya," taught by Gwen Thompkins (NC '87), the former East Africa bureau chief for National Public Radio. Dr. Steflja will teach the course in 2017, with an expanded emphasis on all of East Africa. A scholar of comparative politics and international development, she has done fieldwork in Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, and South Africa.

"Working with these children as I have over the last three years has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. The enthusiasm and joy they bring to life and learning is infectious," said Kenney.