

# **SIUE speech language pathology students gain global perspective on communication disabilities during travel study**

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EDWARDSVILLE - From learning the language of Luganda and embarking on a wildlife safari to observing physical and occupational therapy sessions and helping children with disabilities with class lessons, three Southern Illinois University Edwardsville speech language pathology students gained cultural perspective and a

broadened view on communication disabilities during their five-week summer travel study in Uganda.

Under the direction of Kathryn Brady, PhD, associate professor of speech language pathology and audiology in the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior, the students traveled to multiple Ugandan communities and experienced life on the campus of Ndejje University.

“Study abroad opportunities help students grow in ways we can’t even quantify,” said Brady, upon the group’s return. “The students became more independent thinkers, more accepting of differences, more open to experiences, and braver, a lot braver, about tackling the unknown and putting themselves in situations where they didn’t know everything.”

The participating speech language pathology and audiology students included Katherine Wilson, of St. Louis; Brianna Bowles, of O’Fallon, Ill.; and Sarah Geatley, of Cedarhill, Mo.

“I had never been out of the country until this trip, and it was the best decision I have ever made,” Bowles said. “It forced me to get out of my comfort zone and see the world. This trip was life changing.”

Brady and the students visited a different community each week to explore the nature of communication disorders in Uganda.

At Katalamwa Cheshire Home, a rehabilitation facility for children with severe disabilities, students observed physical and occupational therapy sessions, worked with children on academic skills, talked with parents of children with communications disorders, helped out in the workshop where craftsmen made wheelchairs, walkers, other equipment and more.

Additionally, the group visited a number of schools, received regular lessons in Luganda, a Bantu language spoken widely in the central part of Uganda, took cooking lessons and experienced the incredible beauty of Uganda’s countryside.

“I was gratified by the attitudes of our students and the growth that I saw over the course of the five weeks,” Brady explained. “They all approached this experience with enthusiasm, curiosity, tolerance, flexibility and a desire to learn.”

In today’s world, Brady emphasizes, students, especially future clinicians, need to be more culturally competent than ever.

“They need to be consciously aware that their perspective on almost everything is driven by their culture, and that the lens through which they view the world is not universal,” she said. “This understanding is especially critical in clinical settings where we serve people from a range of cultural backgrounds.”

Brady anticipates strengthening the relationship among SIUE, Ndejje University and other community organizations to ensure more students can pursue this high-quality program in Uganda.

Student blogs featuring travel highlights and reflections are available at [siue.edu/~kabrady/2018-travel-study-in-Uganda](https://siue.edu/~kabrady/2018-travel-study-in-Uganda).

The [SIUE School of Education, Health and Human Behavior](#) prepares students in a wide range of fields including community and public health, exercise science, nutrition, instructional technology, psychology, speech-language pathology and audiology, educational administration, and teaching. Faculty members engage in leading-edge research, which enhances teaching and enriches the educational experience. The School supports the community through on-campus clinics, outreach to children and families, and a focused commitment to enhancing individual lives across the region.