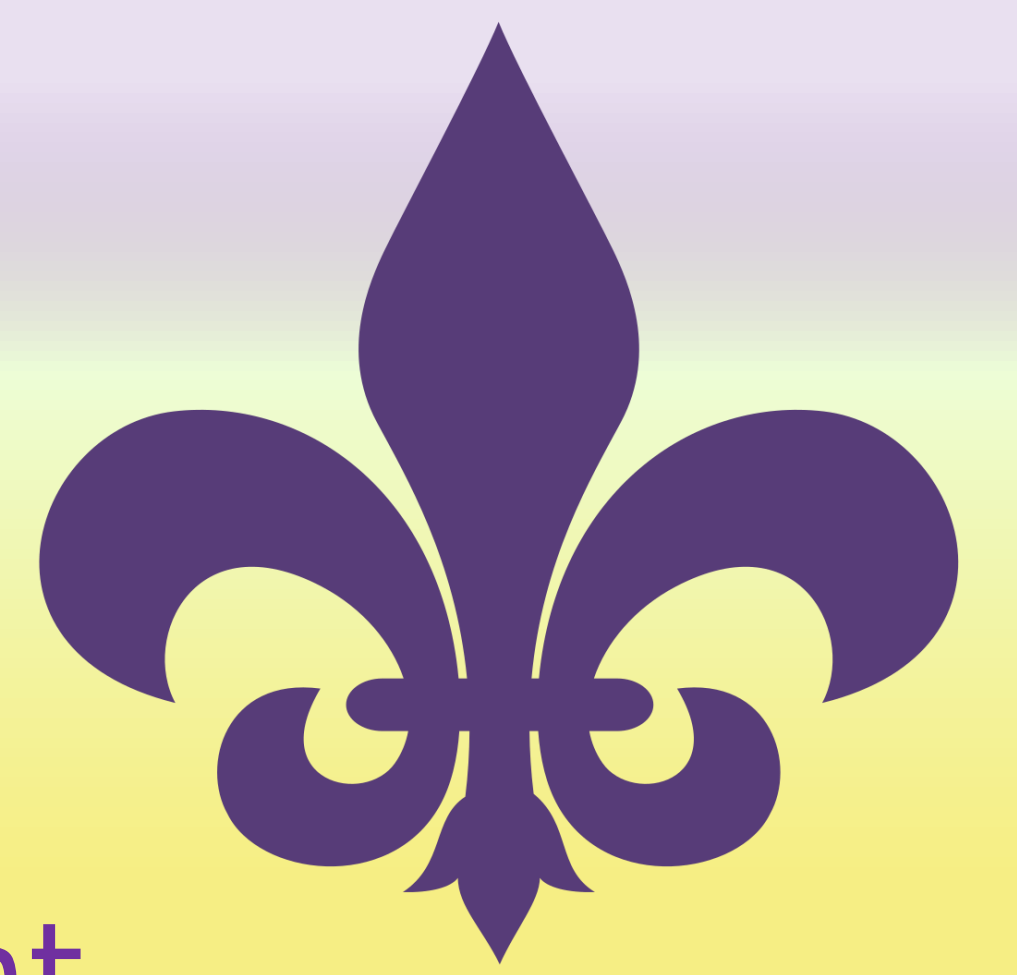




# Helping New Orleans Fleurish: A Student Reflection on an Alternative Break Experience in the Lower Ninth Ward

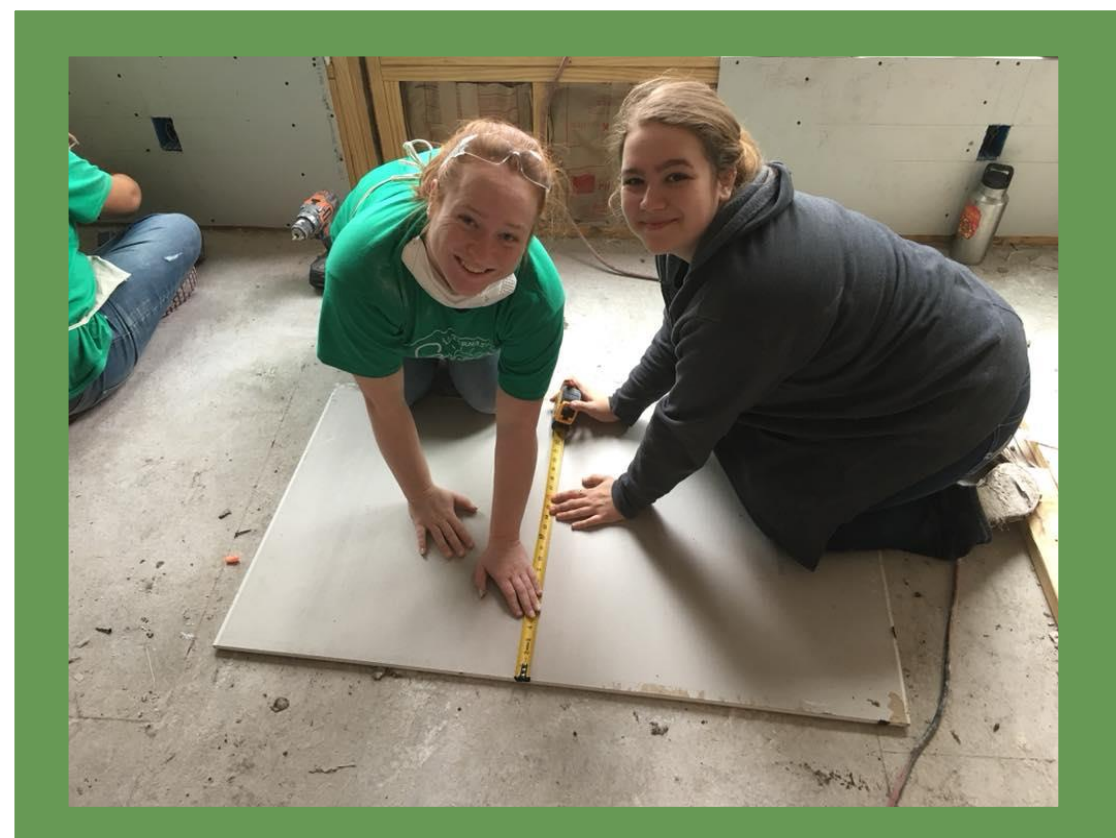
Roni Fraser, University of Delaware

Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, 2<sup>nd</sup> year Master of Arts in Sociology Graduate Student



## University Affiliated Disaster Relief Service-Learning Experience

In January 2018, I participated in a weeklong Alternative Service Break (ASB) trip sponsored by the Center for Leadership and Service (CLS) and the Emergency Management and Disaster Science (EMDS) departments at the University of North Texas.



Our team of thirteen, 11 students and two EMDS professors, partnered with SBP, a national disaster relief nonprofit. We helped rebuild homes in the Lower Ninth Ward affected by Hurricane Katrina and Rita in 2005.

SBP AmeriCorps members taught our team how to apply interior drywall within the home...



... and after 24 hours of hard work, we completed all the dry wall and met our volunteer objectives for the week!



Dr. Ronald Schumann, UNT EMDS professor and New Orleans native, planned an educational field trip that turned the city into a classroom for our last day on break. We visited a Louisiana swamp, the Lower Ninth Ward Living Museum, Bonnet Carre Spillway, and the Lower Ninth Ward Hurricane Katrina Memorial (above).

## Takeaways and Benefits

Throughout the week, the concepts from my emergency management courses came alive as we drove through the narrow, bumpy streets of the French Quarter to the Lower Ninth Ward. While one can read about concepts such as relief and recovery, the people of New Orleans are still *living* in a perpetual disaster recovery process. This experience showed me that what we study *really* matters and motivated me to pursue disaster research at the University of Delaware. (left).



From classroom acquaintances to life-long friends, our team bonded throughout the week. These relationships bettered my experience for the rest of my time as an emergency management student at UNT (above).



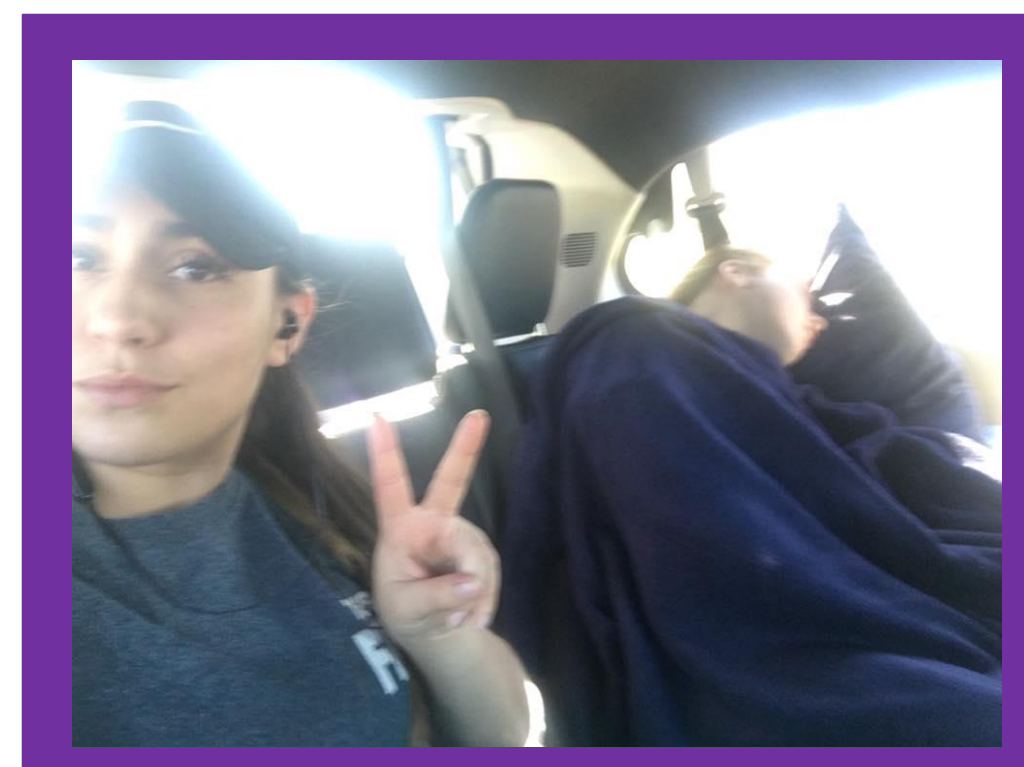
We made forever memories...so much so a student got a tattoo on our last night in New Orleans to commemorate his experience! (above).

## Obstacles and Challenges

The weather proved to be a challenge throughout the week. Daily forecasts during the January visit were usually between 30-50 degrees with cloudy skies and rain showers... adverse conditions for us Texans (left).



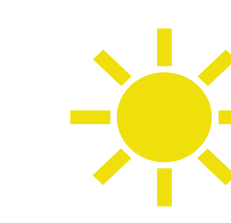
Construction work can be tough mentally and demanding physically... as seen by Dr. Mary Nelan (left).



Unfortunately, two team members contracted the flu... which required a visit to the Urgent Care. After a taxing week being sick and volunteering, it was finally time to rest on the nine-hour drive back to Denton, TX (left).



Initially untrained in construction techniques, there was a learning curve to improving our dry wall installation skills (left).

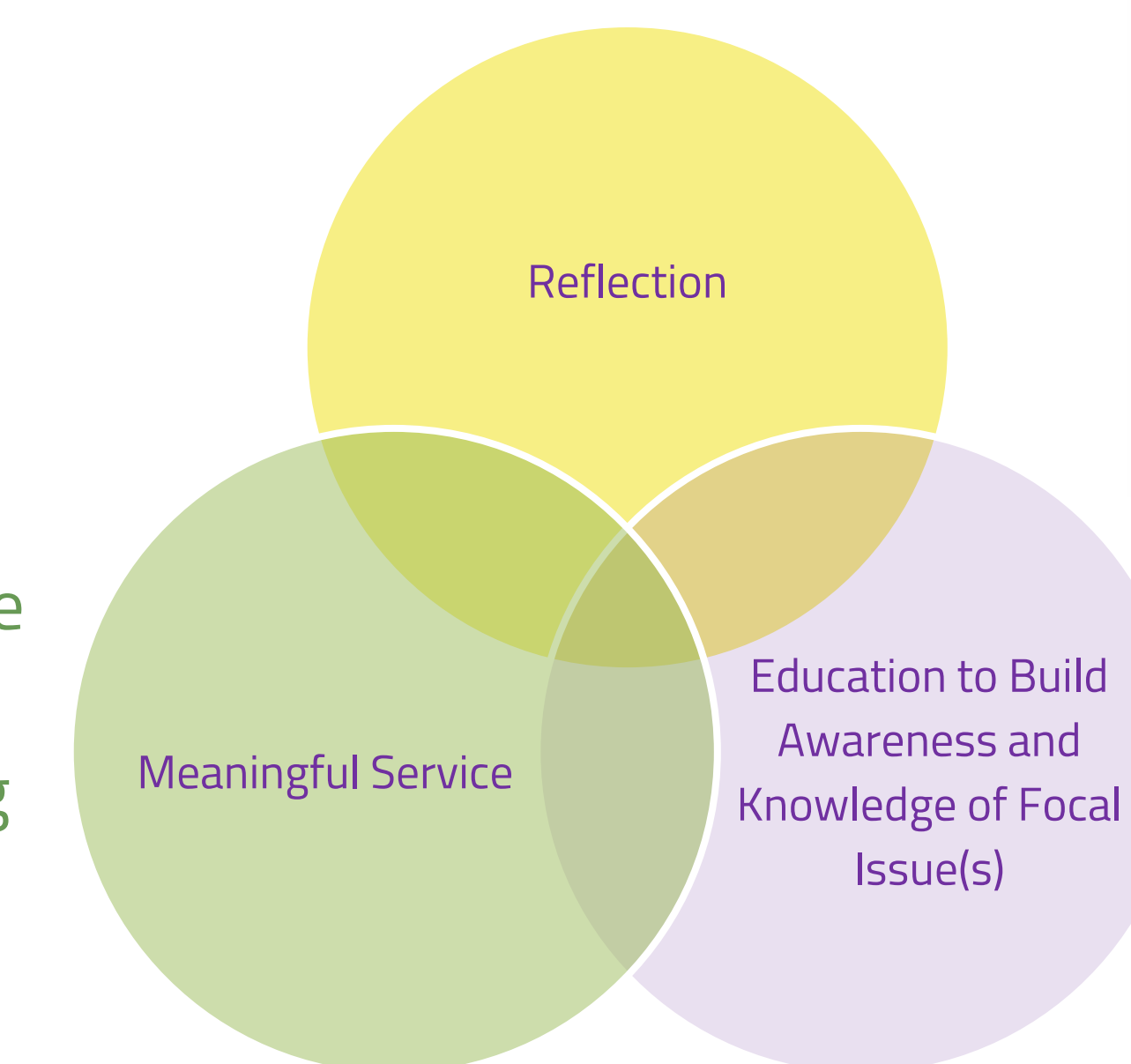


Participants should check the weather, pack appropriately, and receive all CDC recommended vaccinations before departure to better protect yourself and team members while traveling.



ASB Programs need to incorporate de-stress activities within the daily agenda. Suggestions include group reflections, individual journaling, or time exploring the local community (left).

Universities service service programs implement Breakaway's model for service learning to encourage the development of active citizens (below and right).



### The Active Citizen Continuum



Students can learn more about their focal issue through reading the news, engaging with scholarly literature, or watching documentaries before and after volunteering (right).

