



Preventable Blindness: UTSA SEEs a Solution

Jordyn Ruiz, Medical Humanities, 2020

Service

SUMMARY

Surgical Eye Expeditions International is the leading sight-restoring 501(c)3 humanitarian organization on a mission to combat the growing epidemic of preventable blindness worldwide. As the former President of Unite For Sight at UTSA I gained the necessary experience to establish the first student chapter of SEE International in the nation at UTSA in the Fall of 2019. I worked closely with the executive team in Santa Barbara, CA to form a long-term service project in an effort to support the non-profit through a focused student chapter. I helped coordinate monthly fundraisers for our adopted regions in the Philippines and McAllen, TX where the UTSA SEE Program was a part of the solution to preventable blindness. My goal was to bring the UTSA community together to exponentiate the outcomes for patients in our selected regions and create a model for other universities to adopt.



SPICES

A service mindset created the SEE Program at UTSA by presenting students with the opportunity to break the cycle of hardship visual impairment and blindness causes making patients, families, and communities stronger and healthier.

HERBS

I decided to create another platform for students to benevolently serve humanity when the Unite For Sight's Global Health Society Program dissolved on a national level. SEE International exemplifies strong resilience amidst unfavorable news and the power committed individuals have to render equitable medical care for others worldwide.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

I learned that adaptability and resilience are fundamental aspects of any project or endeavor, specifically for the success of the SEE Program at UTSA. I took the creative courage to propose a long-term fundraising campaign with SEE Intl and the executives of the non-profit were thrilled to partner with the University. I had the opportunity to meet with the CEO/President of SEE Intl, Mr. Avolio, to discuss how UTSA can be a model for other universities to adopt the same initiative and engage their communities to mitigate preventable blindness. Through project management and team collaboration, the program is just starting to restore sight and transform lives.



IMPACT

According to the World Health Organization, 39 million people are blind but 80% of these cases can be prevented or cured. SEE's programs have helped over 4 million people receive free eye care, including over a half-million surgeries, and UTSA SEE has funded 100 sight-restoring surgeries in the Philippines in just one semester. In addition, through this experience, my purpose has surfaced. I demarcated a cause that resonates deeply with me to dedicate my time, resources, and heart into. The ability to practice this passion and work with an incredible team equally dedicated to serving humanity has oriented my life in a direction to pursue medicine, and one day provide impactful and life-changing outcomes for others.

ADVICE

Dear Student, learn to appreciate the doors that were closed in your life for they are directing you to entrances somewhere else. Remember to always pursue what is meaningful to you because you have a responsibility to yourself and to others to be uniquely you. "Pursue what is meaningful not what is expedient" –Dr. Jordan Peterson