

THE IMMOKALEE EXPERIENCE

Immokalee is an inland melting pot of farm workers from around the world, and its population of roughly 25,000 nearly doubles in the peak agricultural season. If you're seeking a cross-cultural experience, this is the mother lode.

"We try to provide as many opportunities as possible for third- and fourth-year students to complete their core clerkships and electives in Immokalee," said Karimu Smith-Barron, faculty administrator in Immokalee, where roughly 70 percent of the population is Hispanic and the 2008 median household income was about \$30,000. "This sort of augments whatever they see at their main campuses, and provides a multicultural component.

"They see such a plethora of medical pathology here. Patients are coming from all over the world. A lot of uninsured patients. Patients who have been medically neglected.

"Our students are exposed to some medical issues that they might miss otherwise – things that are being farmed out to some specialist in less-rural communities. It's a good opportunity to be exposed to as much as possible, to practice your Spanish speaking skills and Haitian-Creole speaking skills, and just to learn good medicine."

Unlike Marianna, Immokalee doesn't play host to students for their whole third year. It has an impressive new medical clinic run by Collier Health Services at the Isabel Collier Read Medical Campus, but it doesn't have a hospital or the medical staff that third-year students would need for a full year. Still, every year about two dozen third- or fourth-year students complete their six- or eight-week rotations in family medicine, pediatrics or internal medicine and learn things they couldn't learn elsewhere. They work with patients whose needs – and gratitude – are great.

"In Immokalee, I have learned how to provide high-quality health care with limited resources," said Komal D'Souza, Class of 2011. "Also, the rich diversity of the community was a great avenue to practice culturally sensitive health care."