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Citize* Launches in an Effort to Support Puerto Rico

By Niki Aileen

After researching the struggling economy and debt crisis in Puerto Rico, I set out to design a way to give back to the island for my undergraduate thesis. Following a visit to the island to see the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and the humanitarian crisis firsthand, I created and recently launched an online platform called Citize* (pronounced sit-uh-zuhn).

Citize* connects students from The New School in New York City to students from the Idea Platform at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus in providing emotional, financial, and intellectual support. The Idea Platform at UPRM is an incubator that helps students shape their ideas to potentially create start-up companies solely based in Puerto Rico, thus an attempt at improving its economy and promoting entrepreneurship and innovation within the island. UPRM students pitch their ideas on the platform while The New School students contribute by picking one (or all three) modes of action.

In March, I traveled to UPRM, met with several engineering and business students at the Idea Platform and learned of their projects, goals, and aspirations in an under-resourced environment. There are nine projects that are currently being developed and those within the New School community are encouraged to read about each one on the Citize* website. The projects range from education, health, medical equipment, and humanitarian initiatives that were inspired by the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

Niki Aileen is BBA student in the Strategic Design and Management program at Parsons School of Design.

She has done work for several organizations, including UNICEF. She will graduate in May 2018.



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