A fruitful collaboration has been growing for several years now between faculty and students from the University of Illinois and governmental and non-governmental organizations in São Tomé and Príncipe, a small island nation off the coast of West Africa. This relationship is built on mutually beneficial engagement – students learning through projects that engage complex sites and real community concerns while also providing useful technical assistance and end products that officials and residents can use. During the spring of 2010, three faculty in Architecture and Landscape Architecture have begun working on a variety of projects on the island of São Tomé that engage issues of history and heritage in the built environment. In January of 2010, these faculty along with an interdisciplinary group of seven students traveled to São Tomé to learn more about the country, its people and the environment there.

Studio classes in Landscape Architecture and Architecture, while simultaneously enrolled in a seminar about the country, its environment and its social and cultural history, are designing proposals for three sites in São Tomé City: Independence Plaza, an adjacent warehouse district, and a promenade along the sea wall. Joint teams of Landscape Architecture and Architecture students are also designing master plan proposals for a new Appropriate Technology school on the site of a former plantation in rural São Tomé. Each of these projects connects with aspects of the history and heritage of this
country. Ongoing dialogue with our partners in São Tomé is supported through web, blogs, and other digital means.

For more updated information see the Mid-Report of Sao Tome's Independence Plaza designs at http://eslarp.illinois.edu/