A CCBC Faculty-led Study Away Program to South Carolina

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Gullah Culture & Coastal Ecology

Travel Dates: March 21-25, 2027

Study with CCBC faculty from environmental science, chemistry, and health in South Carolina's Lowcountry. Spend three days and four nights based at the Belle W. Baruch Institute for Marine and Coastal Sciences for a hands-on, immersive study of environmental and social issues that threaten both the local Gullah community and its natural surroundings.

At the institute, experience the largest salt marsh region on the US Atlantic coast: half a million acres that act as a nursery for commercially and recreationally important wildlife species, filter sediment and toxins from the water, and buffer the mainland from storm surges while reducing coastline erosion.

Intrinsically tied to the natural environment, the local Gullah people are descendants of Africans who were enslaved on rice, indigo, and Sea Island cotton plantations along the lower Atlantic coast. Today, the Gullah communities sustain their vibrant culture through distinctive language, arts, and music – and through their connection to South Carolina's endangered Lowcountry.

Apply by December 11, 2026!

Program Inclusions

The program fee of $100 includes:

- Round-trip ground transportation between CCBC and South Carolina
- Four nights' accommodations in shared rooms
- All meals
- Emergency medical and basic travel insurance
- Research activities
- All excursions
- Gullah culture workshop
- Guided boat activity

Program subsidized by generous funding from CCBC's Office of Student Engagement & Foundation Board Program Committee

About the Baruch Institute

The Belle W. Baruch Institute for Marine and Coastal Sciences, part of the University of South Carolina, conducts research and supports education to improve the management of

marine and coastal resources. Its mission is to advance basic science for the well-being of people and their environment.

Situated on the North Inlet Estuary, the Baruch Institute is located approximately seven miles from historic Georgetown, South Carolina.

Program participants will reside in Baruch's dormitory in single-sex bedrooms (each with two sets of bunk beds) with bathrooms, a fully equipped kitchen, and a dining area.

Program Leaders

Dr. Cristina Cardona teaches environmental science and oceanography at CCBC Essex. She has led many study-away programs for students and served on research vessels in the ocean as part of three STEMSEAS expeditions. This is her second time leading the South Carolina program. She loves hiking, reading, and photographing wildlife.

Prof. Joe Norris teaches chemistry at CCBC, where he also chairs the sustainability committee and mentors the campus garden club. He leads study-away programs centered on sustainability and helps students to connect science with real-world environmental issues. Outside the classroom, he is an avid birder and amateur photographer who travels to explore and appreciate nature.

Prof. Gina Howell is assistant to CCBC's Provost and Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs. She also teaches ACDV 101 and is the faculty advisor for Humanity First. She cares deeply about people and about improving the human condition for vulnerable populations. She enjoys spending time with family and visiting the mountains of the Shenandoah Valley.

Prof. Andre Ifill teaches in CCBC's kinesiology and sports management programs. He is wellness department coordinator on the Catonsville Campus, directs CCBC's Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning program, and is an assistant basketball coach for the Catonsville women's team. He enjoys traveling, interacting with people, and learning from varied perspectives.

About Gullah Geechee

Gullah Geechee is a unique creole language spoken in the coastal areas of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. It is the only distinctly African creole language in the United States and it has influenced traditional Southern vocabulary and speech patterns.

Source: nps.gov

Itinerary

Sunday, March 21:

Depart from CCBC Catonsville at 8 am. We will stop to eat lunch around midday. Arrive in South Carolina in the evening, unpack, and gather for a group dinner in Georgetown.

Monday, March 22:

Morning: Visit Hobcaw Barony for a guided tour including stops at North Inlet salt marsh, the grounds of Bellefield Plantation, Friendfield Village (an African American village that was once home to 100 enslaved people and was inhabited by black employees until 1952), and the main floor of Hobcaw House.

Afternoon: Experience a guided tour of the Baruch Institute's marsh trail, laboratory, and grounds. We will be picking shellfish and getting muddy! Wear clothes that you do not mind getting dirty.

Evening: Our group dinner will include grilling at Baruch. Pack the next day's lunch in baggies before bed.

Tuesday, March 23:

Morning: Examine via a guided tour Sandy Island, a secluded community where residents preserve Gullah traditions. Our focus will be on both Gullah culture and environmental issues facing the community.

Afternoon: Explore the Gullah Museum featuring a special presentation and a hands-on activity, followed by time to experience the rice museum.

Evening: Enjoy a group dinner at Aunny's Country Kitchen.

Wednesday, March 24:

Morning: Study colonial farm life at the Hopsewee Plantation and Museum.

Afternoon: Tour the site of former rice plantations and study diverse ecosystems and animal species at Brookgreen Gardens, a national landmark.

Evening: Experience learning activities at the Baruch Institute, including a special Gullah dinner tutorial from Prof. Gina Howell.

Thursday, March 25:

Pack up and clean up at 7 am for an 8 am departure from the Baruch Institute. Pack lunch to eat en route. Return to CCBC in the evening.

Scholarships

Participants experiencing financial hardship may apply for a scholarship to cover the $100 program fee. Scholarship requests will be adjudicated in January 2027 by a committee of CCBC faculty and staff.

Application and Adjudication

Online applications are due by December 11, 2026. Applicant interviews with program leaders will be conducted on a rolling basis.

Apply by December 11, 2026!

Program applications will be adjudicated by a committee of CCBC faculty and staff in mid/late December. Participants will be notified of their participation status by early January 2027.

Seats are limited due to transportation and facility accommodations, so acceptance into this program is competitive.

The adjudicating committee will consider the following:

- Application answers
- Faculty referrals
- Program interviews
- Applicability of program to educational and professional goals
- Anticipated graduation date
- Academic standing
- Judicial history

Lodging and Meals

The program includes four nights' lodging in a shared dormitory (separate rooms for males and females) at the Belle W. Baruch Institute for Marine and Coastal Sciences.

All meals are included in the program. Participants who wish to supplement the program's food may bring snacks and specialty food with them.

Insurance

This study away program includes an emergency medical and basic travel insurance policy for the duration of the program.

The program is nonrefundable through CCBC. In case of individual withdrawal, the insurance policy may offer limited cancellation options. In case the full program must be

cancelled prior to departure (e.g., due to travel restrictions), we will attempt to recover funds to use to issue refunds.

Participants who are age 60 and up may pay a supplemental insurance fee.