The Alternative Breaks program allows students to spend their breaks traveling locally, nationally, and even internationally volunteering their time to a variety of service agencies. According to Ekleberry, since its inception, the program has had nearly 4,000 participants and well over twice as many applicants.

“What makes the Alt. Breaks Program work I think is that it’s students planning for students,” said Ekleberry. Unlike other similar programs, UW’s Alternative Breaks program participants consist entirely of students. There are no faculty chaperones or staff that go along on the trips.

The program operates on a cooperative leadership model where responsibilities are shared equally among trip participants. During orientation participants get to know one another, map out their own routes and make plans to check out the local culture.

Trip participants have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the ins and outs of an issue and a local culture for one week. While a lot of the break is spent volunteering, students are still having a lot of fun on the trips, said Ekleberry.

“Coming out of an alternative break you world can’t help but be broadened and your perspective broadened,” he added.

Ekleberry has been the Program Advisor for the Alt. Breaks program for three years. He has worked for the Wisconsin Union for nearly thirty years, beginning in October of 1984.

The next upcoming programs are scheduled to depart on March 23 with road trip destination points ranging from Detroit, Michigan to Pensacola, Florida.

For more information on the Alternative Breaks program and how to apply for a trip visit the Wisconsin Union website at http://www.union.wisc.edu/ and search “Alternative Breaks.”