

Study abroad: a unique learning experience

I decided to study abroad for many reasons. I was encouraged by my grandmother to study in Sevilla, Spain to honor my grandfather, John TePaske, who conducted research there until he died in 2007.

As a Spanish and global studies major, I thought it simply made sense to get out, immerse myself in a culture that was not my own and build my Spanish skills before engaging with some of the more advanced literature courses.

As Rodney Vargas, director of Latin America, Africa and the Middle East programs at the UNC study abroad office said, “an education is not complete until you’ve studied abroad.”

In an increasingly globalized society, studying abroad provides students with an enhanced vision of the world they live in and equips them with a competitive edge in a difficult job market. Fortunately for students at UNC, staff like Vargas’ work diligently to ensure that there is simply no excuse not to.

Carolina offers 328 programs in more than 70 countries in virtually every region and academic interest imaginable. Science majors can study tropical biology in Costa Rica, marine biology in the Galapagos or environmental science in Thailand.

Education majors can gain valuable experience teaching English to students in China, and soon perhaps in Chile and Germany.

Students interested in mathematics and information sciences can enroll in the School of Computing at the National University of Singapore, while art history majors can examine original masterpieces in the birthplace of the Renaissance.

Impressively enough, Carolina is among a small handful of universities in the country that continues to send students to Cuba — granting students the opportunity to gain important insight in international relations from the other side of the coin.

Thanks to an impressive wealth of resources, finances are a less formidable obstacle than most students think. Not only does all financial aid apply to study abroad programs, but additional



Colleen Daly
Editorial Board member

merit based scholarships are numerous and available for students who qualify.

As Vargas points out, many of the programs offered, including programs in Mexico and parts of Latin America, are actually less expensive than taking a semester at Carolina when a reduced cost of living is considered.

Vargas suggests that students should start looking into study abroad programs that appeal to them early on in their college careers. By planning ahead, it

becomes much easier for students to participate in semester or yearlong programs that more fully immerse students in the culture of their region and grant more opportunities for academic growth and development.

On my first day of history class at La Universidad de Sevilla in Spain I slid into my seat and raised my hand as Professor Serrera asked if there were foreign students. Upon discovering some of us attended the University of North Carolina he asked “I guess you don’t like Duke much do you?”

Laughing, we admitted to our deep seeded hatred. Much to my amazement he replied, “Well, my good friend John TePaske was a professor there.”

While I am so grateful for the opportunity to learn from my grandfather’s great academic

companion and experience the city he so dearly loved, I made my study abroad experience my own.

I experienced the solemn beauty of the Spanish Holy Week processions, and danced ‘Sevillanas’ at the April fair. I travelled to Barcelona, France

and Ireland. I made friends that I love and keep in touch with to this day. I finally attained fluency in a language that I love and took classes that challenged and inspired me in completely new ways.

Studying abroad was one of the most personally and aca-

demically formative experiences of my life. I know that I, along with thousands of students that have gained so much from these programs, echo Vargas in encouraging incoming students to open their minds and look into all that study abroad has to offer — no excuses.

OBAMANIA!



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On April 24, President Obama spoke in Carmichael Auditorium about affordable education and student loans. Later that night, the president appeared on “Late Night with Jimmy Fallon,” filmed in Memorial Hall with musical guest Dave Matthews.

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