



Check Mark!

By Ann Oluloro | October 15, 2010

As I sat one night at my desk with a pile of homework that was waiting patiently to be attended to, I noticed my green U of O folder nicely stashed behind a few other folders in my file rack. This green U of O folder isn't just any folder; it is the folder that began my college career. I had acquired this folder my first year in college and over the years have placed numerous important documents in it. As I took the folder out of the file rack, I knew that the folder still held one of my most prized documents that I had created my freshman year in college: a list of ten things that I wanted to accomplish before I graduated. As I opened the folder, now as a college senior, I knew that I would be adding a check mark to one of the items on my list: studying/interning abroad. I could not help but be filled with joy because almost all the items on my list contained a check mark, especially the study/interning abroad item.



Now that I am back at home and reflecting on my experience abroad, I can officially say that interning abroad in Bolivia was probably one of the wisest and smartest decisions that I have made thus far in my collegiate career and possibly in my life. I thoroughly enjoyed the IE3/CFHI Bolivia: Pediatric Healthcare internship in La Paz and Tarija. I was able to complete pediatric rotations in La Paz that included general pediatrics, oncology, infectious disease, obstetrics, and internal medicine. While in Tarija, I was able to concentrate my efforts on one single disease, chagas, which is an infectious disease endemic to several Latin American countries. All throughout my experience, I saw medicine not just at the superficial level of biology but I was able to delve deeper. Deeper in the sense of understanding the context culture, politics, and socioeconomic conditions play in the deliver and administration of healthcare in a third world country. Overall, the program instilled in me an even stronger desire to pursue a medical education that includes international public health.



Furthermore, I walked away from the internship with insight into



another culture and way of life that textbooks and classroom lectures simply cannot provide. I improved in my Spanish and developed long lasting relationship that will last a lifetime. I hope that I will be able to go back to Bolivia this coming summer to visit my host family in Tarija.

Readjusting to my life back in the US has not been easy. For one thing, I had trouble transitioning back from speaking Spanish almost every day to now speaking a minimal amount of Spanish. My mind just really wants to speak Spanish, and in fact, my English speaking and writing skills are not as good as they used to be. Another point of adjustment has been getting re-accustomed to American food and the hustle-and-bustle of American life. In Bolivia, people are more laid back and actually take time to enjoy life.

As I sat at my desk a couple days after returning from my trip and placed that check mark on my list of things to do before I graduated, I pondered to myself what I would recommend for anyone going abroad. Sure, I could say, "Make sure you research the country thoroughly before you go, pack x-y-z in your suitcase, and while abroad visit x-y-z places." However, I will not say all those. All I can simply say since there are a vast number of different internships is that: Go to your interning abroad country with an open heart and mind. Because when you have an open heart and mind, you will be able to make your own unique journey that will shape who you are now and in the future.

