

Question Set #1

1. What are your initial impressions of the organization and an overview and thoughts about the kind of work you've started doing; how does the work match your expectations, how does it match your goals?

My initial impressions of Child and Family Health International and IE3 Global Internships was exceptionally good. I was surprised to find that everything was very organized but simultaneously was also very open to accommodation. We all have a set general schedule of the activities we will be participating in, however the details of that schedule are up to us to decide. I especially like the fact that our obligations as interns end Friday afternoon which allows us to participate in independent travel during the weekends.

Since I am on a ten week program, I will be participating in volunteer service work for the next four weeks, and then start clinical rotations on week five. This week I have started volunteering at Cemoplaf, a private clinic dedicated to family planning, women's health, and sexual reproductive health. I absolutely love volunteering there and getting to experience the incredible work that they do. I honestly didn't have many expectations or goals about my internship in Quito. My main goal or expectation for this internship was to simply experience, observe, and absorb everything that came my way. Most importantly I hoped to learn from these experiences which so far I feel as though I am accomplishing.

2. What stood out to you the most regarding your arrival?

The kindness and generosity of my host family, the people that helped transport me there, and Rosita and the Spanish teachers was the thing that stood out to me the most. To be completely honest, traveling to Quito from the U.S. was a nightmare. Delayed flights, mediocre airlines, missed connections, and a 24 hour layover in a foreign city, left me very discouraged. However once I was picked up from the Quito airport, everything started to fit into place. My host mom was ready for me when I came, and immediately made me feel like home. During the orientation, Rosita and the Spanish teachers were very welcoming and informative. Overall, my arrival in Quito went very smoothly thanks to the set program logistics and peoples kindness.

3. What was your greatest anxiety prior to departing and how do you feel about that now that you have arrived?

My greatest anxiety prior to departing was my health, especially since I also have a certain luck for random things happening to me. My digestive system, in particular, is very special and I feared that I would get sick often while abroad. While on my last connecting flight, I started to worry about elevation sickness but was relieved when it never came. It was also a breath of fresh air when the days went by and my digestive system presented no problems. In fact, I have experienced less digestive problems while in Quito than I ever have in the U.S. Although I know it is likely that I will be sick of something while on my ten weeks abroad, I feel

comforted knowing that most of the things I worried about haven't happened yet and are unlikely to happen.

Question Set #2:

1) How are things going at work now that you have settled in for a bit? How does this align with your professional goals that you set for yourself? What would you like to achieve in the next half of your internship?

Since I am on the 10 week program, and my time is split in half between volunteer work and clinical observations, Rosita has me volunteering at different organizations every week. Whether I had the option of picking one organization and sticking with it for 5 weeks is unclear, however I never asked because I believed that it would be more beneficial for me to split my time between different organizations. Challenging myself on several levels has always been a professional, personal, and cross-cultural goal. I may be mistaken, however I believe that most people struggle when dealing with change. Personally, I am a person of habit. I like having a set schedule that occurs in the same manner almost every day. Consistency is where I am most comfortable. If I have learned anything from my 21 years of life, however, it is that growth and learning do not occur during the times when we are most comfortable. Growth occurs during the moments where you are most out of your comfort zone and decide to experience something new. Dealing with change is something that I have always struggled with. Although picking an organization that I liked and volunteering there for several weeks would be the most convenient, it would not be the most beneficial for me. I appreciate the opportunity to experience working with a completely different organization every week and learning to adjust to constant change. This way, I feel like I am accomplishing my goal of challenging myself and growing as a professional and as a person. I look forward to continuing to challenge myself in the next five weeks of my internship where I will be doing clinical rotations in a different hospital/clinic every week.

2) How are things going relative to your personal goals? In which areas have you made progress and where do you still have some room to expand? What do you want to make sure you address before you leave?

One of my biggest personal goals was learning to let go of the things I have no control over. Being a control freak has its perks when it comes to getting things done, however it has mostly brought me bad consequences in the past. Accepting that I don't have to have every little detail planned and figured out is something that I have never been successful at doing. To be completely honest, I will probably continue to work through it for the rest of my life. However, I truly believe that my time here in Ecuador has helped me loosen up a lot. The constantly changing work schedule along with the constant weekly travel to new and exciting places has provided me with an outstanding opportunity to embrace chaos. Every Monday morning is a new work adventure, every week night is a mystery as to what my group of friends and I will be doing, and every Friday is an opportunity to explore something new. I have traveled and gone out more in my short time in Ecuador than I ever have in my entire life. The most that I have planned ahead of time has been the night before, which is extremely uncharacteristic of me. I'm not saying that is has been easy, or that I don't still have much more improving to do, however I

can say that my ability to deal with chaos and learning to let go are much better than they were four weeks ago.

3) How are things going relative to your cross-cultural goals? What kinds of experiences have stood out to you so far? What do you want to ensure to experience before you leave?

My main cross-cultural goal upon my arrival in Ecuador was getting to experience the differences between the Mexican and Ecuadorian cultures. Thanks to my Latino heritage, I did not experience culture shock upon my arrival in Quito. There were definitely a lot of things that I had grown unaccustomed to, like having to pay a couple cents to use public restrooms, however it wasn't hard to adjust once I remembered how things worked. There are definitely many aspects of the Ecuadorian culture, however, that I was pleasantly surprised to discover. Although I knew that there would be many differences between the Mexican and Ecuadorian cultures, since it was my goal to discover these differences, I still couldn't help having expectations. One of the things that stood out to me the most was the kind of food that is served here and how it is prepared. Although I didn't expect to be dying at every meal from the spiciness, I did expect some spice to the food. It was a little of a surprise to find Serrano food to be very bland. Of course, I still love the food here though. Another difference that I wasn't expecting was the calm nature of Ecuadorians. Most Serranos speak in very low and relaxed voices and remain strangely calm in the face of conflict. This is of course a huge difference from the very loud and chaotic Mexican culture that I am used to. Overall, it has been truly amusing and entertaining to observe the culture here in Ecuador. I believe that I have been able to achieve my goal of soaking it all in without judgment and without comparing it to the American culture and assuming that just because things run differently here means that they are wrong. I am definitely looking forward to experiencing the aspect of healthcare in Ecuador more in detail once I start clinical observations and hope to continue to achieve my goals.

Question Set #3

1) Describe a day in your life – what is your work schedule like, what do you do after work, how do you balance your time between work and exploring life outside of work?

Clinical rotations generally start at eight in the morning and end at noon, with the exception of some clinics/hospitals that start shifts earlier. I typically wake up fairly early in the morning in order to have enough time to get ready and eat breakfast before I head out. Depending on where the clinic, the time to get there and the mode of transportation to take varies. Once I arrive at the clinic I job shadow a specific doctor for the time allotted. After I leave the clinic I always find a place to eat lunch and then I head back home or run errands like going to the market to get some snacks. Once at home I typically take the time to read through emails, check social media, or take care of important matters from back home like assignments. Occasionally I meet up with the other program participants at four, once they are done with Spanish classes to go and explore a little. Popular places to go are Parke Carolina, the artisanal market, or Plaza de las Americas which is a mall. At 6 I have to be back home again for dinner with my host family. After dinner I take the time to Skype with family back home or read a book. I typically go to bed early, however sometimes I go out at night with my friends to bars, Salsotecas, or simply to watch a movie. Since I am not in Spanish classes I find that I have more than enough time throughout the weekdays to explore Quito and socialize with friends and Friday through Sunday are spent traveling to other new and exciting places in Ecuador.

2) Housing: What is your living situation like? Knowing what you know now, are there other options you would have chosen instead? If you can provide some resources for future interns, that would be most helpful.

I am living with a host mom in a big four story house in the northern part of Quito. For the first four weeks of my internship I shared a room with another program participant. Since she left two weeks ago, however, I have had a room to myself. My host mom is absolutely wonderful and made sure to welcome me and inform me to remember that I should feel at home. I get breakfast and dinner Monday through Friday at my home stay and my host mom doesn't let me do absolutely anything. My laundry is done for me every Thursday night, my room is cleaned every week, and I get my food served to me. To be completely honest, I am extremely uncomfortable with the spoiled way I get treated at my home stay. I know my host mom simply tries to be a gracious host, however, I was taught to be independent and to always offer a helping hand when at a guests house. All this aside, however, I would not have chosen any other housing option. Living with a host family in Quito is by far the most convenient option.

3) Finances: How is your budget working out for you? Are you spending more or less than what you expected? How much do you typically spend on food, recreation, travel, etc.? What would you do differently knowing what you know now?

My budget is working out fairly decently thus far. The amount of money I am spending is pretty close to what I had expected so thankfully I am not running out of money any time soon. I have always been a thrifty person and I am really good at managing my money so sticking to a budget hasn't been very hard. It also helps that everything in Ecuador is fairly cheap. On a typical day, my money is spent on transportation and lunch. Lunch is almost always three dollars in most places and taking the bus only costs twenty five cents. Therefore, on a typical day I spend at least three dollars and fifty cents. The weekend travels are usually where most of my money is spent. Taking a bus to different cities in Ecuador usually cost just a little over a dollar per hour of the bus ride. For example, taking a bus to Mindo which is about three hours away cost around four dollars and fifty cents. Hostels are really cheap most places, ranging from eight dollars per night to twelve dollars per night. Most of my money is spent on recreation during my travels but costs vary greatly depending on what you do so it's hard to estimate how much one weekend travel costs in total.

4) Travel and Transportation: How do you typically get around town and to work? Are you satisfied with that choice? Would you recommend other options? Do you have time to explore the surrounding area on time off? How do you manage that? What do you recommend for travel options? Where do you recommend exploring?

Quito is a really big city so there are various forms of transportation. There are four different kinds of bus systems, all of which cost only twenty five cents per ride, and of course there are also taxis which are also fairly cheap. The four different kinds of buses are the Trole, Ecovia, Metrobus, and the standard small city buses. All of these have different routes that they drive through but their fairly easy to remember once you figure it out. Personally, I dislike taking the buses here in Quito because they are always extremely crowded and people can get really pushy when getting on and off. I have a budget to stick to, however, so I just suck it up and travel by bus anyways. Once its dark outside, I prefer to use the taxis to get around because they are

safer than traveling by bus. A fifteen minute drive on a taxi usually costs no more than two dollars. As mentioned in question number one, I am doing clinical rotations for the remainder of my trip and I don't have to go to Spanish classes in the evening so I have a lot of time on my hands to explore around Quito. In the city of Quito, I would highly recommend visiting Mitad del Mundo, the Guyasamin museum, El Panecillo, La Basilica, El Centro Historico, the artisanal market, Plaza Foch, and the various parks throughout the city. In Ecuador, I would highly recommend visiting Baños, Mindo, Otavalo, Tena, Montañita, and Cuenca. Overall, Ecuador is beautiful so anywhere you travel will be a great experience.

Question Set #4:

1) Professional: How well did your coursework prepare you for your internship? What knowledge of your field has been most important so far?

Since I am conducting a medical internship, being a human physiology major with a career aspiration in medicine has provided me with the necessary coursework to prepare me for this experience. My general understanding of the biological sciences as well as human anatomy and physiology has proven to be most helpful during my clinical rotations in different hospitals. Although I do not remember a lot of what I learned in my medical terminology class, having a very basic knowledge of medical terms has been very beneficial. Of course, being bilingual has been the most beneficial thing of all because I have no trouble understanding what people say to me. Although my coursework in the field of sciences has helped prepare me for my clinical rotations, my coursework in sociology and diversity in the human services has been the most important knowledge I have acquired and has helped prepare me for my internship as a whole. Living in a different country with a different culture can be very difficult for a lot of people, however I believe my background as a Mexican immigrant and my knowledge acquired in different social science classes has helped make this experience much easier and enjoyable. Particularly in my diversity in the human services class, I learned that one must always treat everyone with kindness and compassion, and never jump you conclusions when dealing with different cultures. I learned that one must always keep an open mind and when one encounters a situation in which something seems odd and unfamiliar, to embrace it and learn from that experience instead of judging and jumping to conclusions.

2) Cross Cultural: Describe an event where you misunderstood something due to cultural differences. What did you do? What would you do next time?

I particularly remember being asked this exact same question during the interview process of my application to this internship and just as I didn't have a direct answer before, I do not now. I cannot honestly recall a time where I misunderstood something due to a cultural difference. As mentioned above, my cultural and ethnic background as well as my diversity coursework has prepared me most beneficially to be culturally competent enough to help avoid situations where I misunderstand something due to cultural differences. I came to Ecuador with the acceptance that I didn't know anything about its culture and its people, therefore I came with the knowledge to keep an open mind and simply absorb everything that I observed and learned here. Because of this, I have learned a lot about the Ecuadorian culture and human interaction and am very happy to say that I have not encountered an embarrassing or difficult situation regarding cultural differences thus far.

3) Personal: What are the most important things you have learned about yourself thus far through this experience? What has been the greatest personal challenge? What has been the greatest reward?

There are various things I have learned about myself thus far throughout this experience, but if there is one that has surprised me the most, it is my incredible ability to adapt to change. Interestingly enough dealing with constant change and chaos is something that I have always struggled with and would consider has been my greatest personal challenge. Being a control freak and a person of habit, dealing with things that I can't control and constantly changing schedules are my worst nightmare. It is something that I have constantly struggled with, or so I thought. This internship pushed me to challenge myself and in the process I learned more about myself than I could ever imagine. Reflecting upon my time here and the challenges I have faced made me realize that I in fact am very good at dealing with change. I am very hard and critical on myself, something I have also come to realize, which is why it has been so hard for me to realize that I have been dealing with change my entire life. Since I was born, my life has been filled with big changes. Since my parents' divorce at age four I have been constantly moving from place to place and school to school. I have lived in two different countries, five different cities and countless different houses. I have had to learn how to think, speak, and write in a completely different language. Throughout all of these experiences, however, I have persevered and adapted quickly. Realizing this, although it shouldn't have taken me this long, has been the greatest reward of this experience. I have learned several other things about myself as well, not all happy realizations but realizations that I needed to make just the same. Its extraordinary how much international travel and education truly changes you. Everyone always says that but I never really knew how true it was. Nothing about my experience here in Ecuador has been out of the ordinary from what I could do at home, however, being in a different country is what truly makes a huge difference. It changes the way you think, and therefore the way you look at the world.

Question Set #5:

1) Please describe the organizational structure at your host organization (think of an org chart) and who you have been working with during your internship.

The main person in charge of the program and the person of contact throughout the internship is the local coordinator Rosita Tamayo. Besides your host family, she is the first person that you meet upon arrival. Rosita provides all program participants with an orientation, usually a day after your arrival, and she is the one that you keep in touch with if you have any questions or concerns. For the first five weeks of my internship, I coordinated with her to choose my volunteer sites. For the last five weeks of my internship, I coordinated with the medical director Susana Alvear, and her assistant Elvira, to plan out the clinical sites that I would be visiting. I had weekly meetings with them to discuss how my rotations were going. Additionally, each clinical site had a doctor that I would be shadowing and had to be in contact with. Child and Family Health International also has staff in the U.S. available to support you with anything, however in terms of local contacts, Rosita and Susana were the people to talk to.

2) Describe the workplace culture at your host organization. How does your personal cultural lens work within the culture of your host organization?

The workplace culture that I was exposed to was very similar and also very different from what I am accustomed to. Ecuadorians in general have very laid back and casual attitudes. Unlike the American culture, Ecuadorians aren't very task oriented and aren't as time sensitive. Being early or on time is a rare event, and being late isn't considered unprofessional. People generally aren't rushed to go from one task to another. As someone who always likes to be on time and is very task oriented, it was a little hard to get used to this aspect of the Ecuadorian culture at first, but I eventually got used to it. Like most Latin American countries, the workplace culture was very sexist. As a feminist and social justice activist, this was much harder for me to handle than anything else. It's something that I always struggle with when I visit my family in Mexico. I was able to cope with this, however, by reminding myself everyday that I was simply there to observe and not to judge and that part of cultural competency is being able to deal with cultural differences even if you don't agree with something.

Question Set #6:

1) Upon reflecting on your internship experience, are you more or less committed to a career in this field? What experiences have contributed to this?

To completely honest, my internship did not help me narrow down my career options. I am neither more or less committed to a career in the health field. I honestly have no idea what I want to do for the rest of my life, but it is important to understand that this confusion has been present for a long time. The more years I am in college, the more classes I take and the more experiences I have, the more prominent my confusion gets. There is so much I would like to do with my life and narrowing down to just one career isn't possible at the moment. Although my internship didn't help me much in the career determination department, it provided me with a tremendous amount of personal and cultural growth.

2) Looking back at your pre-departure journal or notes, how did your impressions of the host culture change? What was the most frustrating aspect of your host culture? What was the most enjoyable aspect?

Thanks to all of the pre-departure material, I had a fairly good idea about what the Ecuadorian culture in general was like. Like anything else, there were individual differences between people but my general impression stayed fairly constant over time. The most frustrating aspect of the Ecuadorian culture was the sexism but this was something that I was prepared to encounter. No matter how prepared I was, however, I couldn't help but get mad every time I would walk down the street because I could never escape being cat called. This is something that I will never get used to because I believe it is inherently wrong, however, as a coping mechanism I did learn to just keep walking and not let it affect me as much. The most enjoyable aspect was all of the relationships I was able to build. Like I mentioned before, Ecuadorians are super laid back and relaxed and are also super non-confrontational. This means that you were instantly friends with everyone you met. It was really easy to get along with people and everyone was always super nice and willing to help. Also, the availability and affordability of food was sensational.

3) What words of advice do you have for future interns as they prepare for this internship and living in your host country/culture?

My advice to future interns is be prepared to step out of your comfort zone and be willing to observe and absorb everything that is going on around you in a non-judgmental way. The biggest challenge that I saw other interns in the same program experience was coming to grips with the cultural differences. As an example, a lot of the interns had a hard time seeing the differences in cleaning and sanitation in hospitals. It is important to recognize that just because different countries do things differently than the U.S. doesn't mean that they are doing it wrong, it is simply a different approach. You have to be willing to open your mind to different approaches and question your beliefs. You will be challenged on a daily basis, so being able to learn and adapt is a very useful trait.