Selina Thomas, Jordan, 2009

University of California, San Diego
California

My study abroad experience in Amman, Jordan neatly brought together my interests in the medical field and in Middle Eastern countries, providing me with a stimulating environment to learn and opportunities to explore professions in healthcare outside the U.S. The program centered around two classes, on public health and epidemiology, taught by a professor from my home institution. In addition to lectures, the courses included field experience that involved shadowing physicians at refugee health clinics and collecting health data for research. I was also able to visit institutions such as the World Health Organization, Jordanian Ministry of Health, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, where I learned about Jordanian health infrastructure and programs. As a pre-med student, these experiences were invaluable, and sparked an interest in global health. Even with the intensive studying, I was still able to find time to wander-through the local shops, riding horses in the old city of Petra and floating in the Dead Sea.

My study abroad program had a great impact on my academic and professional goals. I added a global health minor to my curriculum, and the required classes proved to be some of the most informative and inspiring ones in my education. I began working on a research project with my professor in which we are conducting a survey of the health needs of the Middle Eastern refugees in my own city. Since graduation, I have continued to work on this project while I prepare to apply to medical school in a year. My hope is to eventually work as a doctor in a third world country, serving the underprivileged.

"My study abroad experience in Amman, Jordan neatly brought together my interests in the medical field and in Middle Eastern countries, providing me with a stimulating environment to learn and opportunities to explore professions in healthcare outside the U.S."

Follow-on Service Project

For my Follow-on Service Project, I gave a presentation to a group of community college and transfer students in a pre-health-professional program, the UniversityLink Medical Science Program. As an alumna of the program, I shared about my personal experience of studying abroad, including finding and financing the trip and writing scholarship essays. I also promoted the Gilman Scholarship Program. Before a providential series of events that led to my study abroad experience. I had often wished to travel but had never thought it was realistic to study abroad. Being a transfer student and STEM major, I knew that fitting a study abroad program into the few short years between transfer and graduation appears unfeasible, and the costs frequently look prohibitive. It was my goal to show the students that studying abroad is something they could seriously consider and accomplish.