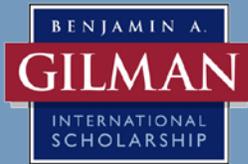


Gilman International Scholarship Program



Brijette Romstedt
Costa Rica, Fall 2009



Johnson County Community College
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My study abroad experience had an immeasurable impact on my personal, academic and professional goals. I expanded my skill set and brightened my options for future endeavors. On a personal level, I sharpened my communication skills, developed much needed patience, and was able to use leadership skills that I can now apply to other areas of my life. Academically and professionally, I have gained the confidence to pursue my lifelong dream of working abroad.

As a Spanish major, studying abroad was very important for my language development. In Costa Rica, I studied at the Universidad Veritas, a small private university with a bilingual faculty and intensive Spanish programs for foreign students. The courses taught in Spanish that I took at the Universidad Veritas were at a much higher level than classes at my home institution. I have always been extremely interested in Central America, specifically Costa Rica. This nation has an interesting political history to tell due to its uncommon geographic factors. I also learned about the establishment of the Democratic Republic and its oppression of indigenous people. In addition to my courses, I also lived with a Costa Rican host family, which aided the improvement of my Spanish. My host family allowed me to feel more like a member of the Costa Rican community, rather than a tourist.

For my Gilman Follow-on Service Project, I held two presentations to promote the Gilman Scholarship and international education. First, I presented to an intermediate Spanish class at my community college. I will never forget the overwhelming pride I saw on my teacher's face as I explained my study abroad experience to her students. This was one of the most gratifying moments of my college career. I also presented to a Spanish class at my former high school. I spoke about my study abroad experience, gave the students valuable handouts about the Gilman Scholarship, and answered questions about Pell Grants and funding college. The presentations were a way to give back to all the teachers that influenced me to study abroad and demonstrate how hard work can pay off.

Studying abroad has been the most positive adventure on which I have embarked. I have taken a personal oath to never stop exploring the World's wonders and other cultures. The Gilman Scholarship gave me the tools I need to accomplish these goals and for this I am forever grateful. For someone of my social and financial background the Gilman Scholarship has been a golden gift of confidence to fulfill my dreams with my head held high.

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