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Linfield College: Study Abroad in Senegal

Lacey Dean
Linfield College

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Studying abroad is one of the most valuable life experiences a person can have. Youth and traveling are a perfect combination; the moments of true self are had and the memories follow you through the years providing you strength when you least expect it.

Perhaps living abroad for an extended period of time is not for everyone, but studying abroad is indescribable. Take a leap, take a chance, do something different to expand your mind and horizons. I found that though studying abroad is for YOU, in the end, it is an opportunity for you to help, educate, share, or spread your learned knowledge. Bilingualism is an incredible tool in life. Personally you begin to understand yourself, others, and the world more clearly as other contexts or ways of thinking and speaking are opened up to you. Professionally, time abroad can lead to professions you had never thought of doing in life or it can take you one step closer to your future aspirations. Seemingly a cliché, your options DO become endless. The struggles you experience or the struggles you see in the lives of others push you to aspire, lead you through your chosen paths, and teach you the realities of life. Items such as ignorance and patience become different concepts to you. You change. You also hold onto what is important to you. As you mold your life, you shape yourself, you build your consciousness. Pastimes spent with food, art, and music are invaluable; dance moves will never be the same in your eyes. Relationships spark, families expand, love sprouts, and connections fill your soul.

I am about to embark on my second year living in Senegal. For me, studying abroad was not just academic or cultural learning combined with playing and traveling, but it was my time for scoping out a future life in Senegal which essentially meant networking to find opportunities that fit my passions and desires. I teach English and geography at a private French school while interning at two NGO's concentrated on health, sexuality, and gender issues, volunteering when capable, and as we say here in Senegal, I am simply living Senegalaisement. I still struggle balancing three languages and I still cry after a long day when exhausted and missing family and friends in the United States. I have crummy days. I have excellent days. It's life. Sometimes I am Lacey Dean. Sometimes I am Khadija Sangaré. Sometimes I am Lacey Sangaré. Blessedly, my life is rich, especially because of my opportunity to live abroad. I am a teacher to make a living, an intern to gain experience for future work and graduate school as well as to empower marginalized groups and educate to lessen ignorance, and then I am simply me... a young, wandering adult

of different languages, beliefs, experiences, aspirations, weaknesses, strengths, and love.

Lacey Dean
July 24, 2012

