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Stephanie Raso
Linfield College

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Stephanie Raso
Graduating Class of 2013

A New Life for a Semester: What Being Abroad Meant to Me

Studying abroad can mean numerous things, and the meaning of studying abroad all depends on what a person makes out of their experience. For some students it can mean the freedom to explore, the chance to meet new people, live in a new culture, and so forth. Personally while I experienced all of those factors while abroad, I found three main aspects stood out the most. For me what I took away from my experience was being able to learn more about myself, learn more about my study abroad country, and develop my foreign language skills.

Studying abroad is a wonderful chance to learn more about oneself and for me that held true. Being abroad allowed me to continue to grow as a person, by working with challenges such as communicating in a foreign language, and facing new situations. By challenging myself in different ways, I furthered my development and my understanding of who I am. Through new perspectives and new experiences, I was enabled to reflect. This reflection granted me the ability to realize what my strengths are, and evaluate them. In turn this allowed me to alter my skills such as being open, cross cultural competence, and more.

The next main aspect with studying abroad was learning about the country I studied in. In my case, I studied abroad in Austria, and was able to learn more about the Austrian culture and the German language. I experienced Austria and their culture through numerous ways, although one way that stood out the most for me was by exploring on my own. I saw the tourist sights but I also took the time to

explore the local highlights, and through all of this exploring I came to have a better understanding of Austria. But besides exploring on my own, another aspect that furthered my understanding of Austria was having a host family. Culturally having a host family was a great insider look into the culture, and a wonderful resource if ever I needed anything.

Of course as noted I also developed my language skills during my semester abroad. Increasing my ability in the German language allowed me to have the privilege of a more insider look at the Austrian culture. By interacting with people in their native tongue, a person feels a sense of accomplishment, and a developed sense of the culture. I think it can be safely said that this sense of accomplishment and a developed sense of culture can be acquired with any study abroad program. That being said, on a program that involves learning another language a person is able to take their experience to another level.