Zachary Francisco

Step Proposal

Dr. Rick Livingston

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Study Abroad: Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo – Barcelona

**Personal Statement**

I am pursuing a double major in Biology and Spanish in order to ultimately attend medical school and become a doctor. Currently, I am interested in pursuing something in the field of oncology. However, I believe that once I have more experience with rotations this immersion in the field will allow me to obtain an insight into various specializations and find which track is best suited for me. I want to become a doctor because I want to help people and make a positive contribution to our society. I am aware that there are many ways to help people, however I aspire to be a doctor because of a passion for science as well as knowledge in general. I love to learn, and I love being able to explain how many things function. For example, I took an AP Biology class in high school. That class was where I discovered my love for biology. One thing that I remember learning about the origins of lactose intolerance. I was fascinated by this knowledge and it awakened my desire to learn more. Through becoming a doctor, I will gain the knowledge to explain what is wrong with people or what they need to do to be healthy.

Digressing from the preceding, the way I want to use my STEP funds is indirectly related to what I want to do with my main passion. I would like to use my STEP funds towards a study abroad. Since I want to pursue a supplemental major in Spanish, I am essentially required (it is highly recommended, but there is an alternative for those unable to travel abroad) to study abroad. Studying abroad can be very costly, and while I am hopeful my parents will contribute and that working will help me pay for it, any additional way to contribute would be helpful in paying for study abroad. This is where STEP comes in…

I have studied Spanish for 8 plus years. Thus, I have had many different professors. To date, I have been taught by 9 different instructors. Some American, some Latin, and some Spanish to the best of my knowledge. My Spanish is a culmination of all that has been taught to me. I am grateful for all that my professors have done. Out of these professors, three stand out. In 8th grade, my teacher was Senor Sarmiento. He was also my hurdles coach in track. His lessons transcended basic education. He introduced us to Mexican culture, told us personal stories of his travels and his family, and provided support to nurture our learning. His lessons on and off the field demonstrated to me the power of determination to be successful. My freshmen year teacher – Senorita Philips - was the one who pushed me to go abroad for the first time. We spoke outside of class a lot about life and connected through International Club – celebration of the diversity of cultures. We laughed in class and she tutored me when I was struggling with concepts. Abroad, she gave me security and we bonded through love of Spanish culture. Noteworthy, Senor Sarmiento came on this trip as well. His guidance there was unparalleled, he treated us like his own children. Lastly, my junior and senior teacher was Senora Lewis. She taught me the most information about the language and culture to date. I accredit most my learning to her. She pushed all of us to hone our strengths and develop our weaknesses. She trusted us, so much so that she told us when she was diagnosed with cancer. This compassionate, vivacious, wonderful woman was ailed with something she did not deserve. We watched as she wept and told us the news, still being able to smile through it all and say how much she loved each one of us. Shortly before she told us this, my aunt had been diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer. I share the same sentiments about her, that she was not dealt a fair card in life. My aunt died the following spring. My teacher had surgery and, for a time, can say she is cancer free. These people sparked a passion in me to want to help others affected by this horrific disease. I learned, from Senora Lewis, that personableness and the ability to reach others is key in making an impact on people. Upon reflection, I realized I could combine my passion and love for Spanish with my passions for biology, cancer, and helping others.

I am not trying to be the best person I can be just for myself. I have a righteous and selfish goal of doing it for others, for those who have nurtured and helped me more than they could ever comprehend. It is the second most spoken language in the world and thus a highly valued resource to have in supplement to any career. In conclusion, I would like to use my STEP funds towards a study abroad project to enhance my Spanish skills because it will be beneficial to use in the future down the route I am pursuing as well as being an area of personal interest.

**Project Summary**

The study broad that I have elected to purse is based on language and culture and resides in Barcelona. The classes that I can take include Spanish film, literature, grammar, as well as art and architecture. It is a summer program that will be approximately for a month. Students take two to three classes while living in the residency of a native or other options. In addition, there are supplemental excursions offered to further enrich oneself.

**Project Description**

I have studied Spanish language since I was in seventh grade, and while I have a thorough understanding of the grammar and how to read, I am average in my speaking skills and need to greatly improve them to apply them in a real-world setting. Traveling abroad, I will be immersing myself in the culture and language of a Spanish-speaking society. I will be forcing myself to use the language as well as gain the experience of talking with native speakers. Their knowledge is the best resource for gaining a practical understanding of Spanish. I am decent regarding being receptive of what people say, but I fall short in responding. It is very easy to get tripped up thinking of a word to translate. I know what I want to say in English, and then I try to translate that in Spanish; but that is the wrong mindset to have at this point in acquisition of the language. I need to refine my skills at thinking in Spanish and being able to function without a majority dependency on my English language background. Further enhancement of these skills will increase my fluency as a speaker through establishing an independent understanding of the language.

This project is related to my personal aspirations in many ways: living on the west coast, becoming a well-rounded doctor, and further immersion in part of my ethnicity. To start, ever since I went to California I knew that was where I wanted to live. I was enticed by the diversity of culture, gorgeous environment, relaxing lifestyle, and so much more. I have travelled there many times, and each time I utilized Spanish. I listened and understood others conversations. I spoke with other speakers. I explored areas rich with the Mexican culture. These experiences enriched my travels and provided me with an educational opportunity. Moreover, in my endeavor to become a doctor Spanish will increase my reach to patients. This increase in personableness will undoubtedly create a better experience for patients. Lastly, I have Spanish blood coursing through my veins. It is one of the primary reasons why I chose to take Spanish. I wanted to get in touch with my roots. Through acquisition of Spanish language, I have learned a forgotten aspect of my heritage since no one currently living knows how to speak Spanish anymore. As well, I have a heightened cultural intelligence having learned about the Sagrada Familia, Catalan culture, political tension in the region, and more. Going there firsthand, my education will transcend simple acquired knowledge through experiencing the landmarks, culture and native perspective in-person.

In my past, I went to Madrid for four days when I was a sophomore in high school; and I was only able to get a taste of the rich, alluring culture. I made wonderful memories with friends that I will cherish forever and that have allowed me to grow and become the person I am today. I was exposed to an entirely different lifestyle than that of the United States. I saw numerous similarities and differences. There was protesting for education reform for teachers, something very prominent in the United States. There were glamorous department stores thriving with consumers. There was wonderful, different food that I had never imagined – I ate an actual honeycomb. There were endless art museums and churches exhibiting the wonders and beauty of the past. I saw castles in urban cities with endless gardens painting the landscape. The mix of modern with the charms of the classic architecture was something the United States lacks due to being such a young country. I long for more enriching experiences. I want to diversify and educate myself on the lifestyles of a culture very distinct from my own. I had the opportunity to go on this trip because of my professor, Senorita Philips, who pushed me to step outside of my boundaries. I had never been out of the country before, and despite the fear of travelling without my parents I had the support of my teachers and friends – something that created a unique experience that I consider to be once in a lifetime.

Furthermore, this study abroad provides a unique networking opportunity. Beginning, this program is through the ISA. In their summary of the trip, it was stated that students will take classes only with other ISA students. This provides me with the resources to meet other students from Ohio State as well as other universities who are passionate for Spanish language and culture as well. Moreover, given that I will be on a Spanish academic campus I may be able to establish connections and make friends with native speakers that attend the school (or even professors). I would like to do a homestay and live with a native, which is a popular option. Living in the home of a resident, I am confident that I will be able to connect with them each day on numerous levels over meals, exploring, or just casual conversation. I am a very social person and I am confident that placing myself in an environment where I am starting fresh – with no solid connections – will allow me to flourish and create long lasting relationships.

Studying abroad in Barcelona will enhance my experience at OSU through increased comprehension during classes, recognition of culture and diversity, and appreciation of lifestyle. Regarding classes, since mine are upper level they are all taught in Spanish. I understand the material, but I do not participate as often because it takes too much time to form my response in my head. Increasing my comprehension of Spanish will increase my confidence and ability in speaking the language. In addition, I am signed up to take a Catalan culture class this upcoming fall. Application and understanding of this knowledge in Spain will increase the amount of material I get out of the class. Continuing, OSU is already a hub of diversity. I believe it has altered my viewpoint through exposure to many different aspects of a variety of cultures. Seeing Barcelona will further expand my views on culture and thus broaden my scope on life. As well, I can apply a worldlier perspective to my life in Columbus. I am sure there will be aspects I learn to appreciate more about the United States as well as aspects of Spain that I will miss when I leave.

The professional development co-curriculars that I attended include the internship information session, art workshop, and mental health meditation. The internship session detailed the aspects of STEP regarding internships and pursuing such. It was interesting and very informative, however upon going I realized it was not worth it in comparison to a study abroad. Study abroad offers a more beneficial experience for me because of my current goals of increasing fluency in Spanish, getting more in touch with my Spanish ethnicity, and filling a major requirement/taking summer classes to graduate on time. In the art workshop and meditation workshop, we learned about art as a coping mechanism for stresses in life and meditation as a way to be more mindful about one’s mentality respectively. In these workshops, I talked with other students who all knew what they were doing while I was still undecided. Their insight and reasons for what they were pursuing aided me in making my final decision. Rather than overstressing about what to do, I relaxed using the techniques gained and weighed my options according to what I would get the most out of pursuing. Ultimately, I chose study abroad for the reasons stated earlier.

Upon review, I am not sure which classes I will take. In my position, I will be able to take two courses of the following options: contemporary Spanish literature, Spanish art and architecture, Spanish cinema, and Spanish grammar. They all sound intriguing. I was never a reader, but I have always wanted to try picking it up. Additionally, I think reading Spanish literature will enhance my mental skills in the language. Spanish art and architecture introduces more of an aesthetically meaningful culture of Spain. This is something I have never been exposed to before and thus could be a valuable learning experience for myself. I have taken a film class at OSU already, and it was a unique, enriching experience. We did not talk about Spanish film, and it would be interesting to apply what I have already learned about film to Spanish film as well as gain more information on the subject. Lastly, the grammar class would increase my knowledge of the mechanics of the language; and being taught by a native speaker in that environment could be extremely beneficial in becoming a more fluent speaker.

My project is feasible regarding time and resources. It will take place in the summer from late June to late July. Being during the summer, I will gain supplemental education that will support my efforts to succeed at Ohio State as well as not impact my academic pursuits, work, and extracurricular involvement during the typical academic year. Regarding resources, I have the financial support of myself; family; and hopefully OSU/STEP. I intend to look up scholarships as well as the time comes closer to apply for the study abroad. I have spoken with the study abroad services who introduced me to this opportunity through ISA. I spoke with professors about this opportunity as well as other students who are planning to go on the same/similar study abroad. This information was highly valuable in developing my STEP proposal through providing a backbone for what I am pursuing and wish to accomplish.

**Budget**

The above reflects the cost for my study abroad program for this upcoming summer\*. Clearly, it is much more than the maximum $2000 that STEP plans to provide. Ideally, I would use my STEP funds to cover my airfare and transportation as well as other miscellaneous expenses such as those detailed above. These expenses are paramount as one is the mode of arrival to the program, and the others compile the experience itself. \**I plan to travel abroad next summer in this same program (if it is offered), so they may be subject to change*

**Reflecting and Reporting Back**

During my study abroad, I plan on taking plenty of pictures and documenting stories and things that I did that made my experience worthwhile. I will utilize the experiences that I made to write a reflective essay that will be posted on U.OSU.EDU to demonstrate the magnitude this transformative journey will have on my life, and encourage others to pursue the same. I have many friends who opted out of STEP because they didn't want to bear the burden of extra work in their busy lives. I think students speaking passionately about their journey will encourage others to put in the work to gain such invaluable experiences. Additionally, I will present at the STEP Expo where I will display and articulate the components of what made my trip worthwhile – including both the fun aspects and hardships. Sharing one’s experiences is a wholesome way to reflect on oneself while inspiring others to take an opportunity to enlighten and transform themselves.