**STEP Proposal**

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**Project Summary**

I will be studying abroad in Germany in order to improve my German language skills. I will be attending the Goethe Institute in Dresden for two sessions of four weeks, totaling to eight weeks of class and some fieldtrips throughout Germany. It will be in June and July of 2017.

**Description of Project**

The objective of this project is to better my foreign language skills and experience living abroad where those skills would be necessary in day-to-day life in order to become a global citizen who can represent Ohio State and my home abroad.

Through this project I hope to fully develop my interest in language and gauge my interest in it as a career. I have studied language for long enough that I know the only way in which I can truly make great strides forward is through living and studying abroad. It is through this experience that I plan to better myself and leave a good impression upon those with whom I interact. I am excited to represent both my country and my university abroad and gain experiences that I can share with others when I return home.

This experience will be truly challenging for me since I have never been outside of the United States for longer than two weeks. This time, also, I will be without friends or family; this will cause me to test my independence in a way I haven’t had the opportunity to before. Learning to be self-reliant whilst abroad will be difficult, but I am prepared to face the challenge head on and learn as much as I can; I hope to make long-lasting friends while in Germany, as we will be sharing once in a lifetime experiences together, and through these friendships continue to grow in both language skill and understanding of other cultures. Developing confidence and proficiency are important for language study, and I will do both abroad as I attend classes, communicate with German volunteers, and live with another student of German.

The classes at Goethe Institute in Dresden, Germany are in sets of four weeks, with an entrance exam and exit exam for a certificate. The levels range from A1 (beginner) to C2 (non-native fluency) with other classes specifically for professional settings. I will take an entrance exam to gauge my level and be placed in the appropriate class for the first four weeks. With the completion of that level I will move to the next appropriate class and continue from there for the remainder of the program. With the completion of the exit exam, I will receive the appropriate completion certificate and hence will receive credit at Ohio State for the levels completed whilst studying at the Goethe Institute in Dresden, Germany. I will be receiving up to twelve credit hours of German 5797 through this program, which I will need to have credit evaluated upon return in the fall. These credits would send me to the end of my minor requirements, though quite possibly kick-start me into a second major.

The Goethe Institute is a nonprofit cultural association that promotes the study of German language and culture exchange through 159 institutes worldwide. Founded in 1951, its slogan is “Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.” Or “Language. Culture. Germany.” It is a well renowned institution for German study, and has expanded throughout the six major continents in 98 countries. The certificates of completion through the Goethe institute hold weight across the world. To have a certificate of a higher level is to have your skills recognized by one of the only international authorities on the subject. Because of this, Goethe has students from across the globe attend, not only to their regional locations, but also to the Institutes specifically in Germany. I will be living in Goethe provided housing, in which I may very well be living with another student who does not know English, providing me with more opportunities for a truly immersive experience.

Though I have been to Germany once before, it was only for a mere two days before moving on, and it was all spent in Bavaria, the southeastern state. I have never been to Dresden and look forward to getting to know the city and making memories there. Through the Goethe Institute, I will meet people of Dresden and learn more about the city through them. They are to be language partners, so I hope to spend some of my free time with them discovering the city of Dresden.

To prepare for this experience, I have continued my German study at OSU and participated in weekly, casual language tables through the German club. I will continue to attend these speaking tables while I am taking the next German class at my level. Ideally, there will be no break in my study between spring semester and my study in Germany in the summer, as I plan to continue to study and consume German sources throughout May in preparation for the placement exam upon arrival.

**Personal Statement**

I have been studying foreign language since I can remember. Spanish was a mandatory class, and although I was not particularly good at it, I tried my best. By middle school, I finally developed a knack for it; I was getting some of the top scores in my class, competing with my classmates in quick recall, etc., so I continued my Spanish study into high school where I began to lose interest over time and was struggling with changing teachers. It became more difficult to cultivate my interest in Spanish; I felt as if I was learning it for someone else rather than myself, but I was still interested in the prospect of communicating with people with whom I could not have otherwise. I went to exactly two classes in my first Spanish course at Ohio State and promptly decided to change languages. I knew that if I did not care to learn Spanish, it would not be the best use of my time at Ohio State and a waste of the new opportunities offered to me at such a large school.

The summer before my first semester at OSU I went on a trip through my high school, touring England, France, Switzerland, Germany, and Austria. I fell in love with Switzerland and Germany the second I arrived, and thought briefly of trying to learn German if I could so that I could come back and spend more time there. I was already so far in Spanish; it would not make any sense for me to switch after twelve years or so of study. Even so, I daydreamed about being there, speaking the language, knowing the people. It was so beautiful and the people were so kind and welcoming to our group, I wished I could respond to them in German but I barely knew how to say ‘thank you’ at the time. As soon as I left I wanted to go back, and have been planning to do so ever since.

After a *very* brief encounter with collegiate level Spanish, I switched to German, beginner level, and no prior experience. I am two semesters further in the German track than I was placed in the Spanish track, and have not lost any of my enthusiasm. I was fortunate enough to have two excellent teachers in my earlier German course experience who helped foster my original curiosity into true eagerness to learn. I was satisfied with what I was learning, the pace, and relating what I was learning about German culture to what I had seen while I was there just six weeks prior to the beginning of the semester. Though this experience, my passion for the language developed. I found what I thought I was missing in studying my previous language: genuine dedication. That’s not to say that I was not interested in Spanish, but I know I did not devote the time or effort to it that it needed. My interest in German is not due to its overwhelming usefulness in the United States, nor that it would be crucial to my field, but because I want to know it. My interest is my interest, my passion, something I intrinsically want to devote my time and attention to. With my past experiences in language study, I know how to approach it, but this time with legitimate focus and devotion.

When I first approached German, it was purely curiosity; I thought it was beautiful, I had just returned from a trip to Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, and I knew that some distant relatives were German, but as I took classes and developed experiences with it, my curiosity was replaced with enthusiasm to continue learning. Differentiating between the desire to visit and the possible desires to live and work abroad is something I hope to do along with my language study. Deciding this will also impact the goals I have set for myself in German. I know that fluency takes time, so I intend to use this opportunity to weigh if I am willing to dedicate several more years to the endeavor. I think spending time in country will be eye opening in many ways and will give me answers to many questions I had when I began to study German.

**Budget**

Program Expenses:

Education Abroad Expenses: $362.76

Non-Resident Fee - $5

\*\*Geo-Blue Insurance – ($1.50/day ~52 Days) 🡪 ~$78

Study Abroad Application Fee - $150

Certificate of Completion – $129.76\*

Transportation Expenses: $2,152.95

Flights

Going – $970.49

Returning – $1182.46

Tuition: $2,505.60\*

First Session – $1,181.29

Second Session – $1,324.31

Personal Expenses: $1,392.80

Living Arrangements:

Housing – $762.80\*

Food – $600

Misc. Expenses: $218

ISIC – $28

Baggage Check – $80

Public Transportation Costs – $60

School Supplies – $50

\*All expenses for in Germany were converted from Euros to USD on 2/28/17

My total budget exceeds the cost of the STEP fellowship, though beyond that, I am funding it myself. I was planning on using the fellowship to fund the living and studying expenses in Germany, amounting to $1755.56, along with miscellaneous expenses at $108, and using the remainder of $136.44 towards transportation costs in airfare. The rest of the fees will be self-funded, though much more affordable as the fellowship drops the personal cost from $6,622.11 to $4,622.11.

**Reporting Back**

Upon my return to Ohio State in the fall, I will participate in a STEP Expo to share my experience with others, especially with those looking to do a similar project. Outside of the expo, I will be sharing my experiences with students of German at OSU, a resource for other students who want to do this very program. Through this, I hope to encourage others to both participate in STEP and to study abroad, as I know it can be beneficial to anyone. I will also be taking plenty of pictures when the occasion arises, and will be sharing them when I return to the states.