John’s Major: Undeclared

Program: UW Spanish Language in Costa Rica, Summer

Academic Life: I took three classes while abroad: two Spanish composition classes, and one conversation course. The class set-up was refreshing, each day started with some simple questions: “How are you?” and: “What did you do yesterday?” There were lots of small group discussions, and class time was more like structured conversations with some grammar served on the side, I liked it. I came to know both of my teachers personally, and a big part of that was due to the small class sizes (my largest class had only four students), as well as how engaging and personable the instructors were. Despite the laid back atmosphere, or maybe because of it, I improved a lot. It’s easier to learn when everybody in the room is actively participating.

Most Memorable Moments: The ride to the airport for my flight back home made a strong impression on me. I was riding with the same woman who had drove me to meet my host family for the first time, six weeks before. We talked the whole car ride. I shared stories about the places I had visited, and she just kept asking questions, pausing once to tell me a funny story about one of my teachers. Near the end of the ride, she remarked about how talkative I was--the first car ride I had barely said a word. I hope that means my Spanish was better.

Advice for Someone Considering this Program: If you haven’t gone abroad before, or aren’t completely confident in your foreign language skills, then Costa Rica is a great place to go, especially with this program. San José is pretty English friendly, and COSI-Máximo Nivel, the school, gives a lot of opportunities to practice your Spanish and dancing skills with tandem conversation partners as well as free salsa classes. Also, if you watched a lot of Discovery Channel growing up, and want to see the rainforest before you die, Costa Rica is perfect. Lastly, if you decide to go, don’t forget a raincoat.

“I’m more assured of my ability to learn to communicate in a different language in a different place.”