Venessa’s Major: Elementary Education

Program: Student Teaching In Mexico, Fall

Academic Life: I did not take any classes while abroad. Instead, I spent all of my time student teaching. I taught full-time at a school in Sayulita. I was with the 3rd and 4th grade classroom. The teachers at the school were all from different parts of the world, such as Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Argentina. There were 3 other students from UW on the trip with me and we all lived together.

Advice for Someone Considering this Program: I would definitely recommend my program to anyone who is interested. It is just the right amount of challenging and rewarding to give you a full experience of being abroad. I would suggest that anyone applying to the program should have some background in the Spanish language before going as some people in the school and community did not know any English.

What Vanessa Learned About Herself: I learned that I can adapt to tough situations better than I thought I could. The first week I was sitting in a classroom with a Spanish speaking teacher wondering if I had made the right decision. By the end I was able to argue with her, crack jokes with her, and understand her sarcasm, which are huge gains in language acquisition.

Study Abroad and Vanessa’s Future Aspirations: I hope to work with Spanish speaking students and be able to connect to them in ways that monolingual teachers cannot. These students are so smart, but often shut down due to language barriers. If I can communicate with them in their native language I can better assess their academic skills.

“I gathered so much conversational Spanish skills that you cannot learn in the classroom.”