Program: CIEE Community Public Health and Development & Globalization in Thailand, Spring

Lauren’s Majors: Biology and Sociology

Academic Life: This program consisted of four public health courses, and a Thai language course over the entire course of the semester. One of the courses included a 10-day excursion to Laos, so that we could compare their health system to Thailand’s. We practiced using a variety of tools to research community health profiles, and then applied our research to local areas to improve their public health within the community.

Lauren’s Fieldwork Research and Future Career Aspirations: Two of three of the public health courses revolved around fieldwork research. The research was conducted in three different communities in the Isaan region of Thailand, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess community public health. Before studying abroad I knew that I wanted to be a doctor, but getting to work with people in the villages made me sure of my career path. I realized how much of an influence health has on the lives of everyday people, especially a disadvantaged community, and I saw how a small change in health habits could really improve the overall health of a community.

Most Memorable Moments: One of my most memorable experiences abroad was one of the home stays, I really felt like a part of the country and completely immersed in the culture. The community was very excited to have us there and they were all very close to one another. By the time we left our host moms were crying and we were planning for the next time we could return.

What Lauren Learned about Herself: Less is more! I had to live without many of the luxuries that I had at home, which at first bothered me, but eventually I realized that I did not need many of the comforts I was used to, and I put more of value on my experiences than my material possessions.

“Thailand has become a second home to me, and the people there are what really made me feel that way.”