ALUMNI & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2015

Student Services II, Rm 1100
University of California, Irvine
Irvine, CA 92697-2475
(949) 824-6343
studyabroad@uci.edu
www.studyabroad.uci.edu

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- **Invitation to Attend: UCI's 50th Homecoming & Study Abroad Center Open House** 1
- **Life is Too Short Not to Live in Rio** 2-3
- **Breaking Borders & Building Up New Experiences** 4-5
- **Written Reflections** 6

PAY IT FORWARD

Make a life-changing experience possible!

See details on page 5...

You're Invited!

Celebrate UCI's 50th anniversary at Homecoming Event!

Please join us at our **Study Abroad Center Open House** as we celebrate UC Irvine's 50th Anniversary Homecoming on **Saturday, January 31, 2015**. During your visit, you can virtually travel the world as you enjoy international treats, view our student poster display, and network with fellow study abroad returnees and staff. Pick-up your free "I Zotted Abroad" nametag to share with fellow alumni when & where you studied abroad! We also encourage you to showcase your #ZotAbroad spirit by wearing international or university attire you acquired while abroad. We would love to know if you are planning to attend: **RSVP** here.

Several other events will take place on campus that day, including a festival in Aldrich Park complete with live entertainment, food trucks, free giveaways, Anteater Swag, and more. We encourage you to see & do it all! For more details, visit:

http://www.alumni.uci.edu/events/homecoming/index.php

We look forward to seeing you there!

Life is too short not to live in Rio!

By Yaneth Andrade, *UCEAP Brazil spring 2014 participant*

Since my freshman year of college I have been obsessed with Brazilian Portuguese, from listening to music to spending countless hours watching clips on YouTube. I find it extremely fascinating how similar it is to Spanish, but at the same time how complicated and different it is. So naturally, I was drawn to the study abroad options in Brazil. What ultimately influenced my decision to go to Rio de Janeiro was the fact that this would be the city hosting the 2014 World Cup! There was no better time to go to Brazil; I would have the opportunity to experience *Carnaval da Rua* during March and the biggest sports event in June.

As I left California to study abroad in Brazil for the spring 2014 semester, I was excited to explore and discover Rio de Janeiro's beauty first-hand through my own eyes. Although my time there was full of amazing memories, I came to discover that not everything was pretty and pink. As soon as I landed in Rio I faced the first of many complicated situations. My luggage was no were to be found and at the time I was not able to successfully communicate this to the airline employees who only spoke Portuguese. Fortunately, I had chosen a country with beautiful people who embrace outsiders as family and I was able to quickly discover a solution to the problem. It was then that I realized how difficult it would really be to learn Portuguese, even though I already spoke Spanish, but I was ready for the challenge! As classes continued, I quickly began to fall in love with the country that challenged and redefined me. Soon enough, I felt as if I had been living in Brazil all my life. This is when I realized that I truly considered Brazil my home.

When talking about my abroad experience, one of my favorite parts is clarifying that I did not travel to Brazil just to attend the World Cup, but instead happened to be living in Rio de Janeiro when the event took place. As a "local", I had the opportunity to see the city change and nationalize as the World Cup drew closer and the number of tourists flooding the city became larger. Like many Brazilians, I escaped the crowded beaches and touristy areas to head to the locals-only spots to watch the soccer matches.

During my trip to Recife for the *Croatia vs Mexico* soccer match I came across an argument between a hotel receptionist and a British man. Since the receptionist did not speak English well and the British guest did not understand Portuguese, I stepped in to help translate. Afterward, the British man told me that he had traveled to many places but had never come across such a complicated and inefficient country until he arrived in Brazil. I explained to him that even though as foreigners we may have our own opinion regarding Brazil's efficiency, it is what it is and as a guest it is our job to adapt to it. It was then when I realized how much I had grown and how much Brazil meant to me.

...*story continues on page* 3

Life is too short not to live in Rio!

...continued from page 2

Although my destination was Brazil, my international learning extended beyond those borders. Like many, I had the erroneous idea that all countries in Latin America are similar to one another. Through my travels to Argentina, Peru and Uruguay I had the opportunity to prove myself wrong. The differences between my own culture and the many I encountered were mind blowing, which also reshaped how I see my own Mexican culture. It was amazing when people showed as much interest to learn about my country and culture as I did to learn about theirs. I now appreciate my background even more as well as my adoptive country, the United States, as I would not have had this amazing opportunity if it were not for my parents' decision to immigrate.

My study abroad experience has definitely been the most satisfying and life changing experience ever. I learned so much throughout my seven months in Rio de Janeiro and keep learning something new every time I reflect back on my amazing journey through South America. I have gained so many life skills that have become extremely useful in my personal life and professional career. Just by the fact that I am now introduced as "Yaneth Andrade, UC Irvine undergraduate & study abroad alumna," I am able to acknowledge the great impact one decision had in my life. I have a different perspective on life and what truly matters to me. Now that I have left the safety of my comfort zone and not only survived, but truly immersed in a different culture and society, living a true Carioca lifestyle, I am completely confident that I am capable of taking on anything that I set my mind to no matter how terrifying it might seem. The only way to learn and better oneself is to try things that will put us on edge.

"The only way to learn and better oneself is to try things that will put us on the edge."

- Yaneth Andrade

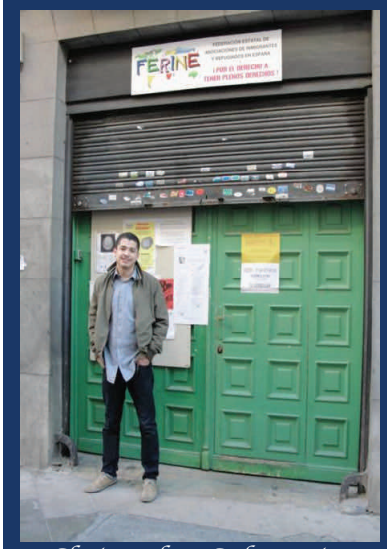
Alumni Spotlight on the Web — ***You*** **could be next!**

Each one shares fears and challenges as well as inspiring personal growth and career successes. We would love to have your story! Fill out the questionnaire at: eee.uci.edu/survey/alumnispotlight

Breaking Borders & Building Up New Experiences:

By Christopher Galeano, *UCEAP Spain fall 2013 participant*

My experience studying abroad in Madrid, Spain on the UCEAP Hispanic Studies program during the fall 2013 semester was the result of a small conversation I had with my mentor and professor, Caesar Sereseres, who is now my research advisor for the International Studies Honors Thesis I am working on. One day, as I brought up my desire to conduct research for my thesis on the immigrant experience, he encouraged me to think of immigration on a broader scale. He mentioned Moroccan immigrant experiences in Spain. Subsequently, I discovered many parallel experiences that Moroccan immigrants faced in Spanish society with those of Mexican immigrants in U.S. society. With a new academic understanding of Moroccan immigrants in Spain, I decided to further develop my international learning and understanding of immigration by studying abroad. While in Spain, I decided I would enhance my study abroad experience by conducting field research. Both of these experiences would give me a first-hand understanding and a comprehensive perspective of immigrant communities migrating and living in Europe.



Christopher Galeano in Spain

At the start of the program I arrived in Spain feeling scared, nervous and anxious all at once. Was my Spanish good enough? How would classes in Spanish go for me? Did people really like American students? Thankfully, I was not the only student who had these worries and as a result became close friends with some of my fellow UCEAP program participants. I came to realize that these worries were all in my head. My host mom was amazing and cooked the best Spanish food! Because she was elderly I enjoyed dinner conversations with her, as she was able to provide her prospective on how much Spain has changed since she was my age. At the Carlos III University of Madrid I took *Spanish and European Law*, *Sociology of Gender*, *Spanish for Heritage Speakers*, *Spanish Cinema* and conducted a Special Study Project all while traveling to other famous Spanish cities spontaneously. I had tapas and sangria on a weekly basis and visited world famous sites, such as Parque de el Retiro and Museo Nacional de Prado.

While in Spain, as I had committed to do, I researched and actively engaged in conversations with North and Sub-Saharan African migrants, and interacted with community-based associations throughout my European travels. In one instance I crossed the Spanish-Moroccan border in Ceuta, Spain, and I then came to further understand the idea of the global migrant. More specifically, I saw Moroccans scrutinized along the border for proper documentation by border patrol and heard stories of other African migrants fleeing political and violent conflict scaling the Spanish maritime borders to reach the "gates of Europe".

...story continues on page 4

Breaking Borders & Building Up New Experiences

...continued from page 4

My research & experiential learning abroad turned migration into an international concern of mine. When I returned to the U.S., my interest shifted towards Mexico and Central America, specifically, where many of my friends and family began their journeys in search for better lives as migrants. This interest motivated me to apply for the Fulbright Research Grant in Mexico for the 2015-2016 school year. Through this grant I hope to travel to Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico to work with and research Central American children that begin their migrant journeys at the Southern Mexico border. As I am writing this, I am still waiting to hear back from Fulbright on their final decision.

Christopher Galeano in front of Plaza de Cibeles in Madrid, Spain.

My journey abroad taught me about the importance of independence and accountability, and the significance of nourishing intellectual curiosity, even if that meant taking it across the Atlantic Ocean. As a student at one of the top research institutions, this experience was also a great example of how effective institutional support is in helping to transform student research experiences.

My study abroad would also not have been possible without the help of two scholarship awards I received, the UCEAP Study Abroad Scholarship and the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. I was able to defray the financial cost of my academic trip abroad and relieve my family from having to fund my opportunity for an international education through the help of these two awards.

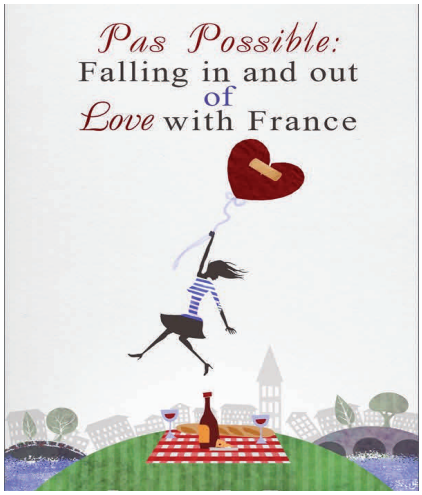
Make a difference! Give the world!

Support us in our mission to send 20% of a graduating class abroad by 2020! Make your gift today at:
http://www.studyabroad.uci.edu/contacts/support.shtml

"

"Traveling outgrows its motives. It soon proves sufficient in itself. You think you are making a trip, but soon it is making you - or unmaking you."

- Nicolas Bouvier

Written Reflections

The impact of study abroad is not often felt or revealed in the moment, but later in the quiet hours spent reflecting on the experience. Whether you studied abroad last semester or over a decade ago, you can somehow still recount the memories and unwrap new lessons. Brennan Lagman & Jessica Pasa, both recently reflected on their year abroad in writing. Brennan, who received a UCEAP Promise Award, just returned from his 2013-14 adventure and eloquently summarizes his experience in one of his blog entries entitled "Goodbye Ghana." Jessica, who received a Humanities scholarship to study abroad in France back in 2004-05, recently published a book entitled *Pas Possible: Falling in and out of love with France*, which is now available on Amazon.com. This year we hope you resolve to keep your 2015 international by sharing in the adventures of others, recounting your own memories, and/or giving back. Happy New Year! Happy New Travels!