An Unforgettable Experience

No New Knowledge is Lost

Skill-Building Workshops

Understanding my Role

Being Fearless

Alumni Update

I hear, I forget; I see, I remember. I do, I understand.

-Chinese Proverb
Naturally, the end of a four-month journey filled with challenges, lessons often learned through process of deliberation and reflection, and mini-battles won is often bittersweet. The CIEE-Service Learning students must say goodbye to their host families, staff and communities, but at the same time are able to leave behind an incredible legacy in the form of participatory research and tangible projects. The accomplishments of this semester’s students are widespread, including: three art fairs, an educational mural, three different focus groups related to recycling, artisanship in the Dominican Republic, and a discipline program for primary school teachers. Their research topics ranged from small business knowledge, diagnostics about recycling and leadership programs and the importance of early childhood education. In this final newsletter, our students share about their experience working within their respective partner organizations as well as their Independent Research and Capstone project. In many ways “independent research” is a misnomer because students collaborated with many people every step of the way: from their research design, data collection, analysis and the final step of public dissemination—students were never alone in the process. Through their reflections in this newsletter, you will find that students have been greatly impacted by these experiences and have come away from the program with infectious attitudes of motivation and a mix of learned and lived passion in being a part of the bigger efforts towards positive social change.

We know that this group will go on to do amazing things! Good luck in all your future endeavors, CIEE-Service Learning class of Fall 2012. Felicidades y recuerda que sí se puede!

-CIEE-SL Staff
The coursework of the CIEE-Service Learning program is meant to help students not only learn about development and community based research, but also support them through the process of undergraduate research. Above is our Capstone research board, where we constantly check off student work, to make sure they are supported throughout the process.

**Spanish**
“The glue” of all coursework with a design that is oral/conversation focused

**Poverty & Development: DR Case Study**
Experiential learning course, addressing micro/macro issues in the DR with critical reflection

**Social Methods**
Intensive course in theory of proposal and research design

**Community Participation & Theory**
Introduction to community and informs students of work initiatives within respective partner organizations

**Independent Research & Capstone Project**
Faculty directed undergraduate research and creation of a tangible project

One of the pillars of the CIEE-SL program is public dissemination; to demonstrate the importance of sharing acquired knowledge and data back to the community and organization that helped with the process. As part of the Independent Research & Capstone Project, students present their research and projects to their community organizations, supervisors, and community members themselves. In this way, students are not only giving back by way of service practicum, a written research and tangible capstone project, but also through an academic presentation of their research and how this impacts the community.
The first day I walked into the Community School of Los Pérez, where I worked throughout this semester, I was completely overwhelmed. There were almost 40 five year old kids in the classroom, one teacher, and rain was pouring down so hard you could not hear anything. I walked over to a couple of the kids and began to introduce myself. I spoke very simple Spanish, *Me llamo Jackie, soy de Boston...* but before I could finish one child said to another in Spanish, “*Tu la entendiste porque yo no***” (did you understand her, because I didn’t). Everything about the situation seemed impossible. I did not know then how much the school would impact me and how special the place really was.

Almost every afternoon, I worked in a kindergarten classroom at a community school run by the community-based organization Oné Respe, that offers programs to promote solidarity and end prejudices of any kind, particularly with marginalized communities such as Los Pérez. I wrote homework and activities in the students’ notebooks, passed out snacks, cut out materials, led activities, and worked with students individually. Every day was a marathon and there were always things to do. I grew closer and closer with the kids as I spent time with them writing the letters of their name or playing a game at recess.

I had another role at the school as well. I was to do community-based quantitative research and a tangible project for the school. Natacha, the director of Oné Respe requested that I research the program at the school and the importance of early childhood education in general. I used interviews, direct observations, and the school curriculum to analyze the methodology in the classroom, measure the classroom management strategies, and determine the effects of the program in the school. I used the data collection and analysis learned from our Social Methods course to create a direct observation guide to determine that the classroom management strategies were more reactive than proactive and could be improved with more activities for the students, along with other conclusions.

The interviews specifically were some of the most impactful experiences of my life. In a couple interviews, I received giggles in response to questions about what their children had learned in the early childhood program. The director of the
school explained to me that since many of the parents themselves did not know how to read or write, they did not have the capacity to know how their children were learning these skills. Other parents were able to say that their children’s behavior, social skills and language had improved. It was at that moment I really saw the importance of education. My already strong passion for education skyrocketed and I understood the beautiful work the school was doing.

The teachers did not have it easy, either. They had a lot of students in their classes, many of which had special learning and emotional needs. Resources were tight, and sometimes they were unpaid for their work. The research showed that classroom management was an issue. Without a good control of kids, they were losing time that could be used for learning. Utilizing this data and collaborating with the director of the school, it was decided a classroom management guide along with a “toolbox” of tangible materials would be most beneficial for the school. I am excited to be able to hand something off to the school that will be sustainable and helpful as they continue the school year.

My final presentation was bittersweet. I was proud of what I had accomplished but every part of me wanted to stay at the school, be there for the kids, and continue to be a part of the community of teachers and the organization of Oné Respe. While some days were painfully disheartening and others amazingly celebratory, I always felt the passion to go in the next day and do it all over again. I went from really wanting to become a teacher to needing to become a teacher. I am excited to bring my experience back to my work next semester as a student teacher in Massachusetts and I look forward to coming back someday. I am leaving knowing more than ever that with a good education, anything is possible.

The research and presentation about our methodologies in teaching and discipline were truly useful in the classroom where we will always have the challenges of having many kids in one class. The recommendations for improvement are also viable.

-Miguelina, Oné Respe
During my semester studying abroad with CIEE Service-Learning in Santiago, Dominican Republic, I was able to spend time with a community-based association of artisans called Arte a Mano. Over the past four years, CIEE-SL students have helped in many aspects of the organization, from its original incorporation to promotional work and membership management, among other areas. Due to this long-standing, mutually-beneficial relationship between CIEE-SL and Arte a Mano, I felt I was welcomed with open arms since day one in the community. I spent a lot of time with the artisans at their homes, the park, art fairs, and the local art museum. Since my major is international business, I was partnered with these artisans to help them with their small home businesses called microempresas. While working with the artisans, I was able to learn more about Dominican art and culture. Through my capstone research project, I was able to help Arte a Mano in increasing their knowledge of effective small business management.

The first part of the research was getting to know the artisans, their art, and how they ran their microbusinesses. To understand this information, I spent my afternoons, Monday through Thursday, with the artisans. In September, I was invited to a big Dominican art fair where I observed them working well together and selling their art. I then asked the artisans to pick three themes that would best help their microbusinesses through administering a pre-test. The artisans selected the themes: Working in Groups, Management of Finances, and Art and Table Presentation.

With the help of the artisans, I was able to organize a workshop about these themes. I had a professor from the local university, Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM), come and present about working in groups. Another professor came and taught about managing finances. Lastly, the president of Arte a Mano talked about the importance of good presentation and display of final art products. The artisans loved the workshop and said they learned new things and were interested in more workshops on other themes.

Two weeks after the workshop I organized a focus group, as an environment for the artisans to share their opinions of the event, what new things they had learned, and how they were going to apply this new information in their microbusinesses. The artisans said they learned about the importance of conflict, how to keep track of their finances, and different designs for presentation la-
bels to include on their art. These labels tell the customer what the hand-made art is, information about the artisan, and information about the uniqueness of Arte a Mano.

The second part of my tangible project was having the artisans attend two art fairs at PUCMM. These fairs were good environments for the artisans to use the new information they learned at the workshop. To help evaluate their perceived progress, I gave out questionnaires to people who had stopped by to look at the art. At the beginning of the fair a representative from the Department of Tourism wrote down the contact information of some of the artisans! Overall, everyone loved the art and we caught many people taking pictures of the different art pieces. The organizer of the second fair was so impressed that she got the contacts of all the artisans and said they were invited to come back next year.

Overall, I believe that the research and project were successful and I think it left Arte a Mano with tangible information that they can apply to their microbusinesses. They were able to show this new information at the art fairs; meaning their new-found knowledge was already being sustained. I cannot wait to come back in the future and see how even further the artisans have developed with their microbusinesses.
The CIEE Service-Learning Program in Santiago, Dominican Republic is building up practical skills within their students. Apart from the tangible skills gained from their community practicum (community organizing and troubleshooting), undergraduate research (quantitative and qualitative analysis), final project (sustainable solutions) and final presentations (public speaking), students also gain intercultural competency skills through our Resources for Ongoing Orientation (ROO) and teambuilding, critical reflection and analysis in our group process check-ins throughout the semester.

But the program doesn’t stop there! As part of the Poverty and Development class, our students learn practical skills through workshops in photo journalism, grant research and writing, and nonprofit organization. Students learn about these topics and then are able to put their new skills into action (as described below). The hope is that these skills will not only benefit students in their time abroad, but also in their future personal and professional lives.

GRANT RESEARCH AND WRITING

Students have the opportunity to learn about the importance of grant writing, how to find appropriate funding resources, and specific writing styles and techniques to use when applying for a grant. Afterwards, in constant dialogue with one of our partner organizations, students collaboratively go through the process of finding and applying for an actual grant.

One year ago, our students helped Niños con una Esperanza apply for the CIEE Ping grant in order to create the first ever community-based recycling center in Santiago. The students were thrilled to see that after they left the program, the organization was awarded $25,000 and the recycling center was opened.

Our students this semester researched and found grants for our rural stay community organization partner, CREAR (the Regional Center for Organic Agricultural Education). They helped the organization write 2 separate grants, focusing on a new project to build a science laboratory for their high school students. We’ll see in the future if CREAR is awarded the money!

Check out the presentation here:
Grant Writing Workshop
Every student studying abroad comes back with hundreds of photos, but how many programs actively teach their students how to take quality shots?

Each semester the CIEE-SL program brings in photographer Ryan Bowen to lead students through a workshop about the basics of photography and photo journalism. Students are then given a photo assignment as a tangible way of demonstrating what they learned and so we can evaluate their work and provide them with feedback.

The idea is that students will then be able to take quality photos that document their work in the communities and the social justice issues that surround them, while learning about the situation and writing about it.

PHOTO JOURNALISM

How do you start a 501c3 non-profit organization?

Our students know. Through our non-profit organization workshop students learn about what defines non-profit organizations, the steps needed to start a non-profit, and get the chance to help us (as a program) in the first steps of creating our own future non-profit organization: a CIEE-SL Santiago, Dominican Republic alumni network

Towards the end of the semester, students start thinking about returning to the U.S. and often begin to ponder what they will do with their new-found passion for community organizing, education, human rights, small business development, etc. Whatever their interest is, our program encourages them to find ways to continue doing what they love. Multiple students in the past have continued their drive for community work by starting their own student organization back on campus or even beginning their very own 501c3 non-profit!

Check out the presentation here:

Non-Profit Workshop
In two weeks I will be back at the airport where I started. Even after all the pre-departure planning, from an online orientation with CIEE to reading every Junot Diaz (famous Dominican-American author) book, I still felt unprepared or uneducated about what the coming semester would bring. In this moment of doubt I remembered an email from a past student that I received after inquiring about this program; one of the questions I asked was, “Is there anything you would have like to know prior to your semester?” One response that I received served as the perfect advice, “Honestly, no. Going into this trip I knew that there were going to be a lot of unknowns and that I was going to have to adjust to a lot. I think I wouldn’t have wanted to learn more before going because I learned so much having to face the unknown, and I see and appreciate that” (Past CIEE-SL Student). Looking back on this experience I’m glad I came into it with a fresh and open mind, ready to surprise myself with what I could and have accomplished this semester by completing my research and project and experiencing everything CIEE Service-Learning has to offer.

My role as a participant and resource for the community this semester has been difficult to define, mainly due to its multifaceted nature. A lecture given by one of my professors at PUCMM Laureano De La Cruz, an accomplished social worker and the professor for our Community Participation course explained the four categories or guidelines for how to define one’s role in a community. Professor de la Cruz explained how at some point during our time here our role has occupied all four categories. Number one, a guide, defined as a functionary that helps to establish need and find solutions. Second, a trainer, who helps stimulate, encourage, and maintain accountability. The third category is an expert, utilizing one’s knowledge, training, and outside perspective. Finally, a therapist, conducting a diagnostic of the community and providing logical treatment.

As the semester draws to a close I can reflect on my time and honestly say that I have assumed all roles in some capacity. I acted as a guide my first month in the community, observing and asking questions. This led to the formation of my research: to analyze the motivations that various users of the center have to recycle. I took on the role as trainer as I
began my research, studying the motivations of why the users of the recycling center recycle and participating in activities that promoted and educated about the center. I still struggled with assuming the role of an expert. How can I, as a college undergraduate, provide advice and act as an expert to an organization that has accomplished so much? I realize that I may not be an expert in my major or in promotional strategies for non-profits; I am, however, an expert in my own observations, opinions, and abilities. With these I have been able to make an impact and share my findings with a community whose confidence and respect I have gained through building relationships. Through the completion of my research and tangible project, I have been a therapist: able to use my diagnostic (research) of the areas to improve the marketing of the center in order to provide them with a treatment in the form of various marketing tools (brochures, newsletters, social networks) and contacts. Recently the other students and I participated in a community service fair at PUCMM. There I was able to utilize the brochures in my project and network with a group of medical students interested in starting a recycling campaign directed at public health benefits.

My time at the recycling center La Esperanza has taught me more about myself than any previous job or class. These priceless experiences are something I never would have imagined a study abroad experience could give to me. Throughout this whole process I have been surprised at how much I have been able to see, experience, and grow.

Thank you to CIEE for allowing their students to spend this time with us. Annie helped show us where we can work together to improve. It was an incredible experience.

-Edward, Recycling Center of Hope
Before heading off on my study abroad adventure, it seemed like there was a broken record asking me, “but why did you choose the Dominican Republic of all places to go?” At the time, I didn’t really have a good answer aside from the uniqueness of the CIEE Service Learning program. Being not only able to take classes, go on excursions, and develop my Spanish skills, but also have direct contact with a community and devote the semester to a sustainable research project seemed like the most logical way of getting something more profound out of being abroad for the semester.

As my journey comes to a close in the DR, I have compared the Hannah from this summer with the Hannah after studying abroad and have realized just how much the program has impacted me. I am now well-equipped with knowledge in international and economic development, sustainability in various aspects, and our right to democracy which not only taught me a lot during the semester, but will help me fight for social justice in the future. The excursions we took weren’t just to swim on a pristine beach, live in the countryside for a week, or walk through a mining community. We connected what we learned in class, experienced it firsthand, and then returned to our communities in Santiago to see how it had an impact there as well.

There are many communities that I have called home in the DR. Niños con una Esperanza (NCUE) is the organization that I had the privilege of working with this semester. NCUE provides a structured environment for the children of Cienfuegos, a marginalized community next to the city’s trash dump, to interact with peers, do homework, eat snack, and learn Christian values. To help support the 340 children who utilize the organization, a leadership group of teenagers was created, called Líderes Defensores de Nuestro País. I worked with this group throughout the semester, teaching eight leaders about different leadership skills like communication, respect, time management, and more.

The students were able to showcase their abilities by leading a classroom of children in an activity about recycling. Through this activity they were able to teach the students about the benefits of recycling while also collecting environmental-themed pictures drawn by the children. The leaders then selected the most fitting drawing and converted it into a mural in the newly-established recycling center at NCUE. The leaders are showed off their skills during this activity, not only in an artistic manner, but also by planning an event, working together in a team, and communicating effectively.
Throughout my work with the leaders, I was able to create a diagnostic of the group to stating what works and what could be improved to ensure the group’s sustainability. From the research conducted I found that the group is completing all of the original goals (to help the children at NCUE, lend assistance to the staff, and to transform the adolescents into strong leaders). I also concluded that the leaders enjoy hands-on activities and want more opportunities to serve not only at NCUE but in their community. For the future, the group should focus on involvement in the community and putting their knowledge of leadership into action. The importance of training the leaders not only benefits NCUE but extends into the community of Cienfuegos and will help the leaders in their future endeavors.

Although I was teaching the leaders at weekly meetings, the leaders taught me something new every day. I learned about having hope in difficult conditions, being fearless in your decisions, and showing compassion in every situation. Not only will the leaders use what they have learned, but I will take these lessons with me as a reminder of my unforgettable semester abroad.

We thank the leadership program. After three semesters, we now have two previous leaders working at the organization’s center.

-Elizabet, Director of Niños con una Esperanza
It evoked similar surprised reactions from people when I told them I was moving to Vail, Colorado to work with a Non-Profit as it did when I went to the Dominican Republic for a service-learning study abroad program. Both locations receive millions of tourist dollars annually and are not the first place that comes to mind when you think of charity, but have poverty masked by resorts and gorgeous scenery. While I had not planned on moving to Colorado, my study abroad experience fostered many ideas and values of what type of organization I would want to be a part of, and my Americorps position with SOS Outreach held up to these new standards.

An article we studied as a part of our Service Learning Capstone Course sits on the desktop of my computer to this day. “To Hell with Good Intentions” is a speech given by Ivan Illich to a conference of international volunteers in Mexico. His main thesis, as bluntly stated in the title, is that it takes much more than a servants heart or a desire to good to help in communities you are not a part of. He goes as far as to say, “I am here to entreat you to use your money, your status and your education to travel in Latin America. Come to look, come to climb our mountains, to enjoy our flowers. Come to study. But do not come to help.”

Due to my background in missions, this certainly was a shock, and not something I bought into right away. However, the CIEE Service-Learning Program then revealed to me some powerful examples of community development, and how empowerment was at the core of all these successes. I have learned from this experience and working with a variety of nonprofits, how truly empowering people is something individuals and organizations have to be increasingly intentional about.

Since September, I have been working in an Americorps position with SOS Outreach, a nonprofit building character in at-risk and under-served youth through outdoor adventure. They have exceeded my expectations in empowering the youth in the Valley. While snowboarding, backpacking, climbing, and other outdoor activities serve as a hook and get kids active, SOS is primarily a leadership development program striving to create leaders who create change.

I help run what is called the University Program. University is a four-year leadership development program with ride days on the mountain, service learning requirements, and life skills workshops. The commitments and curriculum intensifies as the years progress, and it all culminates with the Junior Sherpa peer mentoring program. SOS is among the top outdoor based youth development program in the country because of its approach at creating leaders and empowering youth.

All programs are based on high expectations and revolve around SOS’s five core values: courage, discipline, integrity, wisdom, and compassion. Students are learning how these values apply in leadership, creating change in their communities, and their everyday life. Last week, I was leading a year three workshop where the students identify an issue in the community they want to work to resolve. A group of ten to twelve year olds presented a plan on how they want to combat racism in their middle school. I stand in a ‘Circle of Love’ each week, and have heard a 13 year old stand in front of peers and define Integrity as being true to one’s beliefs even when it’s hard. Last night, a Junior Sherpa referenced the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and joined forces with leaders of SOS to bring youth from both sides of the conflict to Vail to Snowboard and interact. In these moments I realize how these youth are empowered. These students are taking on issues, ideas, and challenges above and beyond what most would classify them as being able to do.

SOS is empowering students to see that they are, and can be, leaders who can create change. The skills they are developing are opening doors in their minds and their lives. I am simply blessed to witness their enthusiasm and apply these same ideas to my career and other organizations.
For more program information, please contact our CIEE Advisor Jensine Fraser at jfraser@ciee.org or check us out at:

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