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This student received the Global Engagement Certification (basic). She attended Archeology Field School in Belize for 4 weeks. Her essays are a great example of the kind of reflection we are seeking. This student sent her essays in a document separate from the application. This is not recommended, but we will accept essays separately if you are having difficulty with the provided form.

D. Foreign Language Proficiency

During my study abroad to Belize for Archaeology Field School, I took a trip to Guatemala for the weekend. From the moment I crossed through customs, I felt an immediate change of atmosphere. All of the signs were in Spanish, people greeted me in Spanish, and the bus driver who drove us to our destination communicated in Spanish. It was quite shocking for me initially, as I had never been immersed in another language and forced to use my knowledge out of necessity. However, I quickly fell into my conversational skills learned in class and managed to speak with the front desk attendant, check into the hotel, and ensure that everyone was assigned to a room.

After the check-in process was complete, my fellow students and I went out to explore the town of Flores. We simply walked down the narrow streets and found multiple stores filled with locally made goods. I was very excited about my chance to bargain and eagerly haggled with a couple of store clerks. Most of them would come close to selling items for as little as half the asking price. At one particular shop, one of our group members attempted to bargain with a vendor but did not speak Spanish. I went over to try to assist him in translation, when I found myself in a miscommunication.

The vendor was telling him that he still owed twenty-five more dollars in order to purchase a necklace, but he insisted that he had given her full asking price. I spoke with her, but we still came to the same conclusion that he needed to give her more money. Finally, another student approached who also spoke the language and informed us that the vendor had been asking for twenty-five more dollars so that she could give him a larger bill as change. This expression was unfamiliar to me. I will always remember that situation as being specific to the region and something I would likely not have learned in any other place.

Later that night, our group was divided when students went in different directions. We found ourselves in a foreign land without phones to find each other. I became the only Spanish speaker in the split group of four, and dinner time was soon approaching. The four of us decided to eat after unsuccessfully looking for the others. For the first time, I went into a restaurant and ordered for a group of people without the aid of a bilingual waiter. We had a couple of misunderstandings, which were probably due to accent differences, but I did get the message across. We all got what we had ordered, and I felt a better sense of confidence in my language abilities after the Guatemalan adventure. (458 words)

E. Cross-Cultural Teamwork

During archaeology field school, I worked very closely with local laborers on various team assignments. Most of the work we performed over the course of the month involved excavation of several units in a nine kilometer radius. There were approximately thirty workers, and I worked on teams in small groups with them for about

a week at a time. When I met the first group I would be working with, the other students and I hiked down a long causeway, through the jungle, and stopped at the foot of a large mound with an abandoned house frame. The workers were sitting inside the house frame chopping fruit they had just found in the jungle with machetes. They all carried machetes, spoke a mixture of Maya, Creole, and Spanish, and looked hard at us as we arrived on the site. The cultural differences were immediately recognizable.

When we split into teams, there were four students and four workers in each group. They noticeably had experience in archaeology and went right to the task at hand. However, we had no prior experience and relied on instruction and observation to learn the process. The main objective for each of us was to participate in every job on the project including digging, screening for artifacts, labeling and bagging artifacts, and sorting them into appropriate categories. The workers moved very quickly and efficiently. They knew each other well, spoke the same mixture of languages, and displayed equal roles in each task. They worked together and never had any conflicts. On the other hand, our group of students hardly knew each other. We were exposed to a new culture, climate, learning new work skills, and dealing with varying personalities. When presented with a task, we operated more individualistically than the workers. Our communication was not as fluid, and we did not readily work together in the beginning. However, through close contact with the locals, we learned to cooperate in order to complete our assignments. They taught us more efficient methods of digging, how to maximize our time and efforts, and the differences in the materials we were trying to find. By the end of the term, we all knew each other by first name, worked side by side with ease, and shared ideas on the nature of the findings. (383 words)

F. Cross-Cultural Awareness

From the moment I stepped into the airport in Belize City, I knew that things were different. I never judge a city by its airport because it is transient and often a poor representation of culture, but the differences in the U.S. and Belizean airports are worthy of acknowledgment. As I walked from the plane to the terminal, I immediately realized that Central American weather would be an adjustment. Obviously the people who live there are acclimated to the conditions, but in Belize heat is a part of the culture. It is hot outside and inside, the food is hot, and people embrace it. Unlike Americans, Belizeans do not attempt to chase away the natural surroundings or change them; they simply learn to adjust and seem quite happy about it. I have often heard that the American South has a slower way of doing things; we talk slower, walk slower, and drive slower than people in other parts of the country. However, I did not know the meaning of “slow” until I went to Belize.

The very first lesson I learned there was a phenomenon known as “Belize Time.” Schedules are merely suggestive, even at the airports. Lacking punctuality would be considered rude or irresponsible in American culture, but in Belize one is thought uptight if in a hurry. People sit back, talk awhile, and enjoy their surroundings. Being exactly on time is not very important there. Communication is done in person, face to face. I only noticed ten cell phones at most on the trip, and they were used by tour guides to plan excursions. Belizeans will go out and find each other in order to relay messages. This may help explain the philosophy on timing.

Another difference I saw between my culture and Belizean culture was the modes of transportation. Primarily, everyone walks to destinations. For longer trips, people will use vehicles at over maximum capacity, utilizing the backs of pick-up trucks if necessary. Seat belts are suggestive, there are no child safety seats, and people ride in the front seats of cars and on the backs of motorcycles regardless of age. There are no traffic lights in the town of San Ignacio, Cayo, and stop signs are optional. The flow of traffic is not chaotic, but both vehicles and people come uncomfortably close to other moving vehicles.

Similar to traditional American culture, Belizeans shared like group dynamics between males and females. Women only groups were common, often nursing children or caring for them. The women cooked and were centered around the home, while the men went out to work during the day. The men worked with us at the archaeological dig sites and then went home in the early afternoons to tend to their *milpas*, or slash-and-burn farm plots. When we had time to socialize in a soccer tournament or dinner event, the men still remained in groups together while the women stayed in a separate group with the children. I am quite familiar with this custom in my traditional southern family.

(506 words)

G. Cross-Cultural Community Service

The roads we traveled daily to reach our dig sites were very remote and rocky or unpaved. Most days, we would see children walking, sometimes without shoes, to a school several miles away. They ranged in age from as young as two to twelve years old, and oftentimes the very small children would be left behind by the older, faster

ones. Not to be confused with the mistreatment of these children, this behavior was very customary and expected in Belizean culture because all of the parents sent their young children to school in this manner. They were taught to walk to their destinations very early in life.

As the days grew hotter and the rains grew heavier, we would stop and pick up some of the children for school. In the beginning, they spoke no English because the primary languages in the homes there were Maya, Creole, and some Spanish introduced by the adolescents in the families. Belizean children often do not learn English until they reach the age for school, and all the courses are taught in English. Those of us who spoke Spanish would speak to them in very basic phrases, which we all enjoyed. As the weeks continued, they would see us coming along the road and begin to smile and wave for us to stop. I think that they enjoyed seeing and talking to us as much as the transportation we provided. Toward the end of the trip when the children had completed more of their school year, they began to test out their new English skills on us. We taught them a few words and phrases, and we had a great time hearing them practice. Simply teaching those children a few things over the course of the trip was truly rewarding.

As we rode in our comfortable, air-conditioned caravan of SUVs every day, I felt spoiled and unappreciative of the minor conveniences we Americans take for granted. The journeys of these children seemed so unreasonable and sad to me, and yet, they were some of the happiest children I have ever encountered. They knew how to live in and adapt to their natural surroundings. The community service was mutual. (364 words)

H. Future Impact

Throughout the course of my major in Anthropology, I have been most interested in the cultural aspect of the field. Although I went on the trip to Belize to study archaeology which I very much enjoyed, the cultural emersion that I experienced was unparalleled. I remember sitting in class, at home, and in the school library for countless hours reading ethnographies of other anthropologists who would go to other countries and live with groups of people studying, writing, and basically becoming a part of their communities. I dreamed of the day when I would get the opportunity to travel to another land and study another culture. Belize gave me that chance to apply all the things I have been learning.

The valuable knowledge I gained from working and socializing with the people in Belize will last me a lifetime. My only encounters with people from other countries have been with immigrants to the U.S. in customer service situations, and only very briefly for information purposes. For the first time, I was the foreigner who had to decipher the local lingo and adapt to the culture. I was very humbled and felt a new sense of patience and understanding that I probably did not demonstrate in prior situations. The interaction with these people taught me how to try different approaches in order to be more effective in communication.

My ultimate career goal is to attend law school, which I will begin in the fall. I plan to study international law, continue to travel the world, and learn from the various cultures I will encounter. This trip to Belize was the first step in my journey of discovery. I always knew that I wanted to travel, but leaving my comfort zone was no easy task. I

feel as though I now have the courage to explore and deal with any unfamiliar situation with an open mind. I look forward to entering a career that will allow me to travel frequently, applying the skills I have learned as a student of anthropology every step of the way. (344 words)