

Dear Class of 1955,

I cannot thank you enough for supporting Cornell and its students (myself included) in gaining valuable experiences outside of the Cornell campus. The Class of '55 scholarship helped to enable my abroad experience in Amman, Jordan studying Arabic and a few other topics this semester. In a short letter such as this I will not be able to express everything that I learned, experienced in, and valued about my time in Jordan, but I hope to give you a general taste of some defining memories and adventures.

Before I even started college I knew that some kind of experience abroad would be an essential component of my undergraduate education. I wanted to learn more about a culture that was different from my own and become involved and invested in living in a place I was unfamiliar with. At Cornell I had the opportunity to study Arabic, which I did out of interest in the language and region, as well as to challenge myself with a difficult subject material. I learned the basics with a great professor here and took all of the courses that were available here. I knew that if I did not do something with my new skills (which I enjoyed despite and because of the difficulty of them) that they would quickly slip from my working vocabulary and eventually fade away completely. So I started looking into study abroad programs and found one that was suitable and convenient.

I arrived in Jordan and started orientation along with over forty other American students. We went through our first couple weeks acclimating to our new environment; figuring out how to navigate through our new surroundings—not just orienting ourselves to our physical locations but learning how to communicate where we needed to go in Arabic—and becoming accustomed to social norms and cultural rules. Our program staff prepared us very well but of course they cannot equip you for every situation. So I learned, some things took time and others were instinctual and stuck immediately. I slipped up occasionally in some respects (and quite frequently as I strove to practice and enlarge my Arabic vocabulary). Eventually I came to know how things worked, what a cab ride from point A to point B should cost, and where I liked to spend my free time. I grew from someone unsure about everything and struggling not to blunder as I worked with my relatively meager vocabulary to a confident and purposeful temporary resident, surprising many individuals I encountered along the way with my grasp of the language (I certainly do not look Jordanian and many locals I met did not expect to hear me speaking their language).

In addition to learning so much and becoming self-reliant in my new, albeit temporary, home I gained much other in ways of knowledge and experience. I came to be familiar with cultural practices that are similar and different from my own through my family and professors. I gained useful skills in communication and realized a heightened interest in travel or living abroad. I took advantage of opportunities that were available to me, even if it was out of my comfort zone. Because of my semester in Jordan I developed a more nuanced appreciation and

understanding of some of the history and goings-on of the region and established some valuable relationships.

I truly cannot express all of the gratitude I feel that I was able to have this experience.

Thank you for helping to make it possible!

Kailey Colestock '14



Eid Celebration-Before our fall break, which coincided with the Islamic holiday Eid al-Adha we celebrated with our professors and staff, eating the national dish of Jordan (Mansaf), and dancing debkeh; many students dressed up in a traditional style of clothing.