

August 15, 2016

Dear Class of '55,

My name is Annie Broutman and I was a recipient of the Class of '55 off-campus studies scholarship. I cannot express enough my gratitude for the gift, which I used to study and intern at a Spanish language school in Xela, Guatemala. Having this experience was extremely valuable to me, as I was both a studio art and Spanish major.

First of all, taking this trip was extremely daunting in the months leading up, as I was traveling for the first time internationally by myself. I had many second thoughts about buying my plane ticket, and may not have ultimately followed through had I not received this gift.

Going alone turned out to be one of the most challenging and rewarding learning experiences I have had in my college career, and that's not to say that every encounter I had during my trip was a pleasant one. My first day in Xela I got lost for over an hour trying to make my way back to my host family's home from the school (a commute that I soon realized should only be a brief five minute walk). The first few days I considered not showering for the rest of my visit, as I was not prepared for the freezing water. Nevertheless, every obstacle I faced was an opportunity to grow. Soon I felt comfortable spending a free afternoon wandering around, exploring the city knowing I could eventually find my way home.

Apart from the romanticism of traveling alone, immersing myself in the country was also essential for my growth speaking Spanish. Since returning, I have used the language on an almost daily basis at my current job in customer service with immigrant families. I'm able to understand how overwhelming it is to live in a country where one's native language is not spoken and my guests have shown me great appreciation. I am confident that my Spanish abilities will continue to grow and remain useful as I make my way along my career path.

I cannot express enough how valuable this trip was to me academically, professionally, and personally and I am doubtful that I would have pursued it had I not had the support of previous Cornell alumni. So thank you for giving me that push and encouraging me to succeed.

Sincerely,

Annie Broutman '17

