

My Summer Research Experience

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This past week marked the end of my summer research internship, which has been an incredible opportunity for both learning and personal growth. I researched sex education in Mexico, a topic which combine my diverse academic interests

To provide a brief overview, the project focuses on the history of sex education in 20th century Mexico. and is specifically interested in addressing the various methods through which people access information about sex and how it shapes the

understanding of sexuality, gender, and nationality.

First, the internship helped me to gain a better understanding of the historical research process. This summer, I worked closely with a professor in Tulane's History Department whom acted as a mentor throughout my internship. Before leaving for Mexico, I engaged in preliminary research by reading a number of secondary sources in order to understand the historical and political context of that period. In Mexico, most of my time was dedicated to collecting sources – both within and outside of the archives. I have spent the past few weeks organizing and interpreting these sources. While I have accomplished a great deal this summer, the project is not yet complete. I learned that undertaking any research project is a significant time commitment that requires both a great deal of patience and realistic goal-setting. In the coming academic year, I plan to continue work on the project. I hope to analyze some of the regional data using ArcGIS software, which I will learn in my coursework this semester.

My Spanish-speaking abilities also improved significantly while working abroad. Prior to my trip, I had taken six semesters of Spanish coursework at Tulane. I had already developed strong reading, writing and comprehension capabilities, yet I struggled speak and maintain a conversation in Spanish. Living in Mexico forced me to continuously speak in Spanish – in restaurants, in the market, in taxis. I began to realize that what had initially inhibited me from speaking freely was not a lack of vocabulary or knowledge but rather a lack of confidence in my own abilities. Once I accepted the fact that making errors is a normal part of the learning process, my speaking abilities improved rapidly. By the end of my time in Mexico, I was able to speak fluidly and carry on lengthy conversations with native Spanish-speakers – a level of proficiency that would have been otherwise unattainable in a traditional classroom setting.

More generally, my internship experience allowed me to realize the importance of having self-confidence in both academics and the professional world. This trait is especially valuable for women because we live in a society where we are often taught to doubt our own skills and abilities. I will certainly carry these lessons with me into the rest of my academic career in Economics, a field in which women are significantly underrepresented. For those of you interested in pursuing a research position, I encourage you to talk your professors, get to know them, and discuss your interests. Most importantly, don't be afraid to ask for what you want. Often, many opportunities exist that are not officially advertised or publicized. In fact, I

wouldn't have had the opportunity to work in Mexico for the summer had I not discussed my academic interests and goals with my professor at the time.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities that the Newcomb College Institute have provided me this summer — it's been an unforgettable experience!