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### My Study Abroad Experience

I chose to study abroad with Middlebury in Santiago, Chile for a few reasons.

First, it is a language intensive program requiring you to sign a pledge to speak only Spanish during your time abroad-unless calling home.

Second, it allowed me to have an internship in public health. Through this I was able to meet and interview many people working in the public health system in Chile during the first half of the semester. During the second half of the semester I worked with a doctor in a rural clinic so that I could see first hand how the public health policies were accepted and carried out, in addition to the opinions of the doctors, nurses, and patients.

Third, I was directly enrolled in classes in the university. This was something that I really wanted so that I could make friends with Chileans instead of just other American students. In the end this ended up being both a pro and a con because my university went on strike and it ended up being a lot of extra work for me to complete my courses in a timely and complete manner. It was also more difficult as there were no other American students with me and the classes were taught at an advanced level-so I had to deal with the difficulty of the classes in addition to the language barrier, although this became easier as the semester progressed. I took two history courses and a linguistics course in addition to my internship and a grammar class taught through my program.

I lived with a home-stay, which was amazing. I highly recommend this so you can work on your language in addition to experiencing the culture on an up-close and daily basis. It also gives you a support group and someone to ask cultural, language, or other questions to if need be.

Some additional trips I took included a trip to the south to Pucon and Valdivia and a trip to the north to San Pedro de Atacama. I traveled to Valparaiso many times during the semester, as this was a short trip not far from Santiago at all. I did not travel too much out of Santiago because I wanted to take advantage of everything the city had to offer. When I did travel, I traveled with one or two American friends for a long weekend. We traveled by bus because it was less expensive.

I would absolutely recommend my program to any student devoted to language immersion that is confident and not afraid to be completely independent in a new environment. If this causes hesitation, then I would not recommend such a self-reliant program.