My Study Abroad Experience Report at Hohenheim University (Stuttgart). Germany.

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Introduction

Overview:
This program combined the development of language skills with English- and German-taught courses that exposed me to Germany’s fascinating history and present-day culture and society. A German language course was available at the beginning and at intermediate level. A German-taught Literature course was also offered to other students at an advanced-level. Field study played a central role in the program, by taking us outside the classroom to discover the rich heritage and contemporary culture of Stuttgart and Germany.

City Description:
Stuttgart is a modern city rebuilt on a tumultuous past. It serves as the capital of Burdenwurtenburg region in the southwestern part of Germany known to have future boldly reflected in the architecture, Automobile innovation, and culture that characterize this great city today. Hohenheim University is one of the biggest and the oldest universities in this region, supported by both the federal gov’t and regional authorities of this state.

I got to set off on the adventure I always wanted. This trip, studying abroad exchange in Germany, has been the fulfillment of my dream. The chance to study in another European country as well as travel around a continent I have never been to before has introduced me to ideas, concepts, places and people I otherwise probably would not have encountered anytime soon.

The courses I studied here introduced me to fields and analytical techniques, many of which were not covered by my course of study back in Africa. A lot of the new perspectives and concepts I have learned have been thanks to the broad array of classes available to students at this university on exchange programs. They allow students to take courses in different majors and many of which were not offered at my home institutions. Before I applied to study abroad, I carefully examined programs to see which courses were available.

When I was accepted to the international academic program at this University, I was surprised to find out my courses were chosen for me. I had written an essay about my academic interests and goals. The tutors here decided what I will study while abroad based on my study learning agreement. At first it seemed like there was a lot of variety in amongst the modules they selected for me. As I near the end of my studies here, I have come to realize that plenty of the material covered in each course overlaps.

Thanks to one module I took, I now have hands on experience administering policy processes in agriculture and natural environment. In another course I studied the essentials in plant pathology and entomological precursors found in horticultural production practices and their interaction that results from the poor agronomic practices in crop production and management.
Yet another course went over how toxic chemicals like mercury that can accumulate in the environment can enter the same blood stream. Despite each course being from a different major, or “course” as Europeans say, I found myself most interested in topics of each course that happened related to each other. I then realize that parts of each course that most garnered my attention where those that overlapped with my main academic interests, the lectures and workshops that I most enjoyed were those most based in pathological findings of plant diseases and in Entomogical plant (insect) science.

I was particularly interested in the practical study of toxins that enter into the human body after accumulating in the environment and exactly how they affect us. This subject appeared in three of my four courses, including nutritional science, environmental management, and soil bioscience. The library at the university was a great source of reference books on my class group project work in regulating chemical accumulation in the environment. Without realizing it at first, my semester abroad helped me confirm what I am most interested in perusing in graduate school and hopefully my own future research and work.

So my future, or the future that I hope to pursue anyway, is a bit more clear to me. However, I wouldn’t say that I found myself on my trip to Europe. At most, this all just reminded me of what I already know about myself and gave me a new perspective to view myself. Another thing that I can say about what I’ve gained from this abroad experience is that it did broaden my horizons. I mostly used the time there by getting to know the other international student who provided endless conversation comparing every little difference between our respective nations. They view much of daily Germany life as foreign and different. I got many French friends and together we visited Berlin and Frankfurt as tourists for Christmas and also to France where we were able to compare the tourist versus local perspective when we reunited. In general, I feel like I have a better grasp of how foreigners view Germany as well as how the world outside of the Germany differs. I have also made connections with countless people from England, Europe and the rest of the world that may be helpful in my future endeavors.

From a practical perspective, I have actually accomplished while on my exchange abroad program. Besides the few credits and the academic knowledge I gained along the way, all the wishes I have crossed off my bucket list was my next biggest major accomplishment while there. I kissed the Vienna city of Austria, and made a pilgrimage to Wien, spoke German in Austria, and explored Vienna, the city of my ancestors. I’m hopefully also saw the Hungarian-austrian boarder when we stopped in Austria on my way back home. I got an adventure I never would have imagined before as well.
I spent an afternoon in a castle that doubled as a space observatory. I took a road trip to Switzerland. I swam in the Mediterranean and I saw the most amazing sculpture park in Norway that I never even knew existed before. I’m having a blast collecting currencies along the way. I have made memories and new friends to last me a lifetime.

My life has changed. I was an independent person before, but by managing to studying abroad I have demonstrated this. Now I have all my experiences to cherish and learn from as well an accomplishment on my resume establishes that I am capable and mature enough to take the initiative to relocate, adapt to a new environment, and learn from new resources.