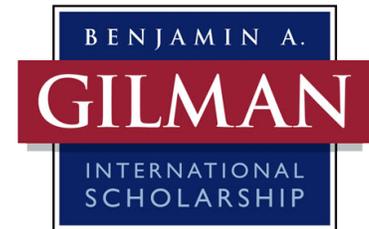


ASHLEY BLACKMON, SPAIN, 2010

Clark Atlanta University
North Carolina



The best five months in my life were spent studying abroad in Barcelona, Spain. It was as if I was truly living for the first time. Initially it took some time to adjust to my new surroundings, but before I knew it, I was extremely comfortable with my life in Spain. Unlike some other study abroad experiences I have heard about, I felt that my study abroad experience gave me an immense sense of freedom. I found myself exploring the city and various parts of the country alone and I loved it! In total, I visited multiple countries in Spain, as well as a few other countries in Europe and Morocco due to proximity. My

school was excellent and I was able to make several friends from all over the world. I also was able to take part in many cultural experiences, including a visit to headquarters of MANGO (a well known retailer) and participating in flamenco dance lessons.

“While employed at American Express and now at PepsiCo, I constantly engage in conversations about global business operations in which I use my personal experiences from studying abroad.”

Academically, I have found myself to be significantly ahead of the curve and always seeking a challenge. I was pleased to find that I equally enjoyed learning about International Economics, International Marketing, and the Spanish language as much as I enjoyed the many activities that surrounded me on the streets of

Barcelona. This truly enhanced my study abroad experience.

Personally, I learned so much about myself and the things that drive me to continue to be successful. Having to adapt to a new society and culture forced me to discover who I am when placed in a totally new environment.

Professionally, I have grown to appreciate my abroad experience because I can leverage it in any business conversation whether that be in the boardroom or at a networking event. While employed at American Express and now at PepsiCo, I constantly engage in conversations about global business operations in which I use my personal experiences from studying abroad. This has served to be an invaluable tool in my professional endeavors.

FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

My Follow-on Service Project goals were to change students' perspective on funding for higher education. My most impactful deliverables were my “How to Apply for the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship” and “Budgeting while Abroad” curriculum. I put these two presentations together for the

Office of International Education to use after I graduated to continue to spread the word of how to be financially sound. In the beginning, my Follow-on Service Project only included information regarding how to apply for the scholarship but I wanted to take it a step further and educate students in managing their money

before and during their time studying abroad. I also presented examples of currency exchanges and how to enjoy studying abroad on a budget.