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Center for International Education

Fall 2007

BIOLOGY MAJOR SAMPLES VARIOUS CULTURES TO DETERMINE FOCUS FOR FUTURE WORK IN INTERNATIONAL HEALTH

A resident of Troy, NY, Zoe Rogers is a junior studying biology and a member of the University Honors Program.

by **Zoe Rogers '09**

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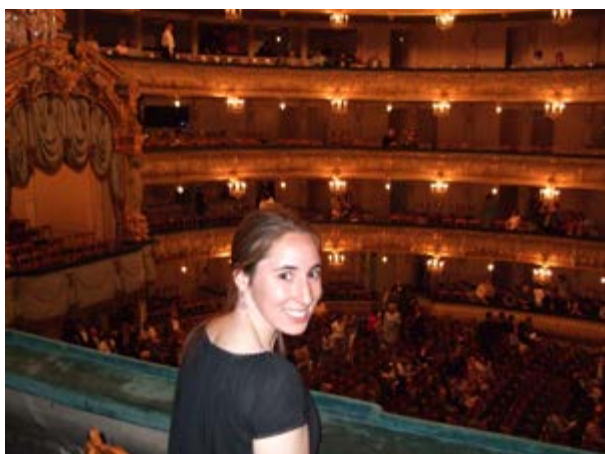
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Zoe Rogers at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg while studying in Russia

I just had to laugh at myself. My Costa Rican host family speaks only Spanish and, sitting in their kitchen the first day, I responded to their questions in Russian. I guess my mind took a little longer to make the 7,000-mile trip than my body. Why this confusion? Before arriving in Costa Rica in September, I spent the summer studying Russian language and culture in St. Petersburg and Moscow. I had studied Russian for six years and needed to experience being there. Luckily for me, my disorientation did not last long and my "da's" quickly changed to "si's."

Now that I am seven months in to my year abroad, I do not regret choosing three different programs. Spending the summer at the University of Arizona's program in Russian, the fall semester in Costa Rica learning Spanish through SOL Education Abroad, and the coming spring semester with the International Honrs Program (IHP) traveling to

Switzerland, India, China, and South Africa is incredibly exciting. Already I am proficient in two more languages, can adapt to different cultures, and have become more sensitive and open-minded.

After attending CIE's study abroad fair, it was impossible to choose a single program. Hearing testimonials from other students' experiences and chatting with program representatives about course offerings inspired me. Because I am interested in international health, I want to see what aspect of this broad topic excites me and what part of the world draws me in.

Studying biology at UNH requires a narrow focus. Science is really a worldwide community collaborating to obtain knowledge and develop technologies. Learning other languages, understanding other cultures, and living in different countries help me establish relationships with a wide variety of real people. Taking time now to explore my different interests is helping me gain a better idea of who I am and what I'm passionate about.

In addition, the spring semester with IHP will enable me to take course work in their Health and Community Program, choosing from offerings such as Globalization and Health, Culture and Health Care, Systems and People, The Stuff of Life: Biology and Behavior, and Community Health Research Methods. A small group of students and professors travel to different countries throughout the semester, and learning takes place through a mix of lectures, guest speaker talks, and field visits. This model provides the student with the opportunity to make comparisons and learn about many types of societies, health problems they face, and approaches used to solve them. Throughout the program, students are involved in homestays, an opportunity to acquaint themselves better with the host culture.

Branching out from my science core by studying abroad is eye-opening. My experiences so far, and knowing there are more to come, make me glad I chose three different programs. The world is bigger than Durham. Studying abroad is too valuable to pass up. Though the programs I am taking are not typical for my major, the skills I am learning and personal growth I am gaining can be applied to every aspect of my life. The more experiences I have now, the easier it will be selecting what I really want to do when that time comes. Besides, in New Hampshire you cannot experience 20 hours of daylight, zip through the canopy of a rain forest, or pick coffee.

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