

Dear Class of '55,

I am sending this letter as a thank you for your sponsorship of my fall semester 2009 trip to Costa Rica. In Costa Rica I was able to study Spanish extensively while living in a homestay and attending the Associated Colleges of the Midwest school during the day. While my Spanish has improved immensely, perhaps the most important gain was the many friends I met and the host parents that I now call "family". My experience abroad has influenced me immensely: as a Sociology/Anthropology and Ethnic Studies major, it has encouraged me to continue my exploration to study other societies. Furthermore, it has deepened my passion to travel abroad.

As a college senior, I believe my choice to study abroad was pivotal in helping me to determine my future. It has helped me to realize that I want to become more involved in combating social injustice and to spend time helping others. Upon returning to the United States I was accepted into two service programs: Teach for America and Peace Corps. I will be participating in Teach for America next year hopefully as a better person due to the patience I acquired while abroad. It requires much patience to learn a foreign language, and hopefully my Costa Rica experience will help give me the patience to teach in a classroom. It is my hope that I will return to Latin America with Peace Corps sometime in the near future.

The Costa Rican national slogan is "Pura Vida" which can be literally translated to mean "pure life". Roughly speaking, it means "relax" and my time abroad certainly helped me to relax and offer a new perspective on my life; it allowed me to prioritize and determine what is important to me. Thank you for continuing to encourage students to study abroad. I believe that it is an important experience that all Cornell students should have the opportunity to pursue.

Below is a picture of my class. I am in the top row, third from left.

Thank you again,

Paul Appel

