

In this issue of *Peer Review*, we feature a range of articles that explore best practices in study abroad programs. Although the amount of time spent away and the settings vary, these increasingly popular programs often have a positive effect on students' global awareness and responsibility. During spring 2009, my daughter Gillian, now a senior at Goucher College, studied in the United Kingdom to fulfill her college's study abroad requirement. Because Gillian's experiences were more typical than extraordinary, I thought it appropriate to give my editor's note to her to get a student's perspective on this issue's rich topic of study abroad.

—SHELLEY JOHNSON CAREY



When I stepped off of the bus onto the University of East Anglia (UEA) campus, I was both relieved and terrified. I was relieved that after a nearly twenty-four-hour journey, I had reached my destination safely. I was terrified because it was my first time so far from home and I didn't know what to expect during my six months of study abroad in Norwich, England. After getting my bearings, I rolled my oversized suitcase

ten blocks through the snow to check in with the international student office, up three flights of stairs in my new flat, and into my room where I collapsed onto an unmade bed. I was finally "home" in a place I had never been before.

UEA international students are mixed in with the school's general population, so all of my flatmates were from the United Kingdom. And unlike at Goucher College, my home school, there are no dining halls at UEA, so I had to cook my meals. Sometimes I was too tired to cook, so I bought prepared foods—many of which were new to me—from the supermarket. Who knew that the combination of tuna and canned corn would make for such a tasty sandwich?

Most of my UEA classes were in large lecture halls, a change from the small classes I was accustomed to. With almost one hundred students in some of my classes, I never had the chance to get to know the professors who taught those courses. Therefore,

when I got behind in my British Television class, I couldn't figure out how to catch up. When I signed up for that course back at Goucher, I thought that televisions would be as common in England as they are in the United States. However, it turned out that very few UEA students had televisions—most likely because the annual license fee to operate a color television is £142 (about \$300). Unfortunately, without a television to watch, I wasn't able to grasp the differences between the British and American broadcast systems and my grade suffered. In contrast, I had a great experience in my art history class, which was held in the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts on the UEA campus. During this class I had the chance to learn in a wonderful public art museum setting, just steps away from international art collections and gallery exhibitions.

Although most of my time was spent in Norwich, I was able to travel to London a few times to visit friends who were also studying abroad. I also had the chance to go to Amsterdam with the international student group, and during my spring break I went to Paris and Venice with my mom. While touring the British Museum and the Louvre, I was excited to recognize paintings and sculptures that I had studied in previous art history classes at Goucher.

Although I sometimes felt homesick and depended on Skype to check in with family and friends, I enjoyed my time at UEA, where I met students from all over the world. I use Facebook to keep in touch with my new international friends. I also picked up a new habit during my time abroad. In England, fast-food restaurants charge for each packet of ketchup, so I only ordered one or two. Now when I go to American restaurants, I think before I grab a handful of anything—napkins, condiments, or straws—because it is so easy to waste in a country where we have so much.

I was happy when I boarded the plane to come home in June, but I was also proud that I'd gone far from everything familiar to me and made the best out of most situations. While I appreciated learning about a different culture, I also came back with a sense of how much alike we all are. As I look toward life after graduation, I know that my study abroad experiences have made my college education more meaningful and enhanced my abilities to connect with and appreciate all types of people.

—GILLIAN M. CAREY