To the University Honors Enrichment Program,

Thank you for providing me with some funding for my study abroad this last summer. At the end of May I went to live in Granada, Spain for five weeks, and so shortly after the spring semester ended I started packing for my summer in Spain.

At this point, several of my friends had already studied abroad for a semester, and a few were even still abroad, preparing to leave Spain while I was preparing to head there. I looked at their pictures, their Facebook statuses, blogs, and skyped with them all during their time overseas. Even with all of that I was not sure what to expect for my own experience. Not only was I going to be in Spain at a different time than them, during the summer rather than the spring, but I was also going to be there for a briefer amount of time-for five weeks rather than four months. Knowing that, it was important for me to maximize my time while abroad and enjoy my time there.

As part of maximizing my time there I decided to take three classes amounting to 6 credits, which would fulfill the remaining requirements for my Spanish minor. I chose to take a Spanish language course, Islamic culture in Spain, and Varieties of Spanish throughout the world. Even though I learned a lot in my classes, it did not compare to what I learned outside of the classroom. The classes were taught well, and the teachers spoke Spanish during the entire class period, but there is only so much one can learn during the hours in spent in a classroom.

Living in another country, particularly in one that spoke another language, extended my education far beyond the classroom. The immersion in the Spanish language kept my mind constantly working from puzzling through the complexities of learning a second language and adapting to it. It was extremely difficult to work through at times, and even made me feel like my English was worsening during the second and third week of my time there. During the fourth week, though, my fluency improved greatly.
This was partly because I had to continually think and speak in Spanish, and so I could not rest or give up on my language skills. Also, I believe that being immersed in the culture helped improve my Spanish education. Talking with the locals, learning the history firsthand, and experiencing their traditions and lifestyle all made speaking Spanish feel natural. I learned why they say certain things in a particular manner, and how their values and beliefs are expressed through their language.

Not only did I learn about others, but I also learned a lot about myself. I found out that I can be very independent, and that I can be flexible if plans do not go accordingly. I learned more about what I personally value, and how to better express my opinions and beliefs.

Overall, the experience, despite lasting for a short term, was extremely worthwhile, and the funding you provided to me is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Marisa Carreon