

UNCW PLS STUDENTS ABROAD

Student Name: Mike Kowalick (on the right in photo at right)

Location: Nijmegen, Netherlands

Duration: First half 2009

What did you do on study abroad that you couldn't do at UNCW?

Studying abroad was never about conventional class-room style learning (although that was quite different as well), but rather was more about developing a real sense of individualism complimented with a new respect for the world by forcing students outside of their comfort zones. One thing in particular that I found abroad which I could not find at UNCW was a setting in which I am a minority. As an international student, I found myself both hated and admired by those around me. The absolute most unique experience that I got though was the ability to see the world through a non-American lens. I feel like that's very important for students, especially PLS students.



Photo at left: Carnival (Mardi Gras), Netherlands (2009)

What was different about you when you came home from study abroad?

A Portuguese friend whom I met in Paris once told me that it wasn't until he finished his study abroad program that he began to notice differences. In that way, I'm still finding little changes every day that I didn't even realize. One of the most significant things I picked up while abroad was the motivation to be involved -- in everything. Since I have come back to UNCW, I have pledged a fraternity, joined the sailing club, joined the 1 in 4 men's group, become a Study Abroad Ambassador, and taken up sailing and community service as two highly-revered personal hobbies. I also have a job on campus and have just declared a minor in International Affairs. Another change is a newfound trust in my surroundings. That one is difficult to describe, but it amounts to me having more patience, more respect for others, and more empathy for other's situations in life. I feel like I could sit here all day and list the changes that I see, but to be frank, there are just too many for me to articulate. The decision to study abroad was absolutely one of the best decisions of my college career.



Canal View, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2009)