Cornell-Nepal Study program

Last semester I had the amazing opportunity to study abroad with the Cornell-Nepal Study Program (CNSP), where I gained more appreciation for life in one semester than what I had learned in the last twenty years. I expected my time abroad to be life changing, as I had learned from my previous experiences abroad including my time with the Hebei-Qimei Agriculture and Technology Company, but I never expected to fall in love with a place the way I did with Nepal.

When I arrived in Nepal I walked off the airplane exhausted. As I made my way through customs I became nervous that perhaps someone would not meet me at the airport because my flight had been delayed. Knowing what I now know, that never would have happened with the CNSP staff but at the time I was worried. As I was getting off the plane I stuck up a conversation with a nice Nepali man, who became very concerned that I would not have anyone to pick me up from the airport. After introducing me to his family, he gave me his business card and told me to call him if I got stranded. At the time this shocked me, but I now know that is how Nepali’s treat everyone, with a kindness found in few places in the western world. This kindness followed me throughout the rest of my time in Nepal.

The Cornell-Nepal Study program is unique in design. Students of the program spend time taking classes in Nepali language, Cultural Issues of Nepali, and Research Design all while living and studying with students from Tribhuvan University. Being able to live with students similar in age to your own while studying together makes for many opportunities for mutual understanding and
exchange of cultural ideas. I will always cherish the friendships I made with the other students in the program. Additionally as a part of the program each student got to travel to a variety of sites within the country with our classes and conduct our own independent research project. The trips included staying in a rural village and trekking through the Annapurna circuit. The most influential part of the trip was my independent research project. For my research project I traveled around three districts of Nepal working with Farmers, Veterinarians, and Dairy Processors researching dairy marketing systems. This gave the opportunity to not only see Nepal but also to work with organizations like the Dairy Development Corporation of Nepal.

Being a part of the Cornell Nepal Study Program truly opened my ideas to the problems associated with agricultural development. As I researched my way across parts of Nepal, I recorded stories and experiences of what it truly means to be involved in agriculture in Nepal. From families that struggle to breed their animals with artificial insemination from a lack of knowledge about heat identification to dairy processors who had inadequate access to milk cooling machinery. What I learned as a navigated through Nepal was the true need for sustainable agriculture development and how human tenacity can accomplish amazing things.

This experience with the Cornell Nepal Study program reinforced my commitment to a career in international agriculture development and also helped me gain a true appreciation for the opportunities given to me throughout my life. I would definitely recommend the Cornell Nepal Study program to other International Agriculture and Rural Development majors. This program has a long-
standing history and because of their experience there are many resources for their students to take advantage of. We were able to tailor many of our courses to relate to the students interests. Thus the courses I took were almost always interesting and related to my major. I truly feel that my experiences with the Cornell Nepal Study Program will continue to benefit me throughout my career. My new found appreciation for Nepal increases my desire to continue working in agriculture development.

Living in Nepal definitely is not easy and even though I had an excellent experience that does not downplay some of the difficulties. At times communication was hard and despite my best efforts I did get sick as well. However, I found that learning to take care of myself and going outside of my comfort zone really allowed me to grow as an individual. It is important to note that while I was in Nepal was a particularly interesting time to be in the country. During this time, a second election was held to elect the second constituent assembly, which will now be tasked with attempting to make a constitution. It was fascinating to get to witness history as it happened in Nepal. From seeing campaigns to witnessing the voting process I truly felt like I got to be a part of a new phase of Nepal's history.

Ultimately, I found that spending time with the Cornell Nepal Study Program was one of the most valuable experiences of my undergraduate years thus far. While it was not always easy, my experiences in Nepal really inspired me to pursue a career in agricultural development.