

SE03EP06

Stand Out From the Crowd!

Elise Carney

Hannah (H): Welcome to Noles Abroad, a podcast by Florida State University International Programs! I'm Hannah

Z: And I'm Zoe! And we are your hosts. On this podcast we'll talk about study abroad from the perspective of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni who make it an experience worth sharing. We'll also bring you travel tips and fun facts from around the globe.

Z: On this episode, we interview, Elise Carney, a First Year Abroad alum who studied abroad in Spain and Panama. Elise is now studying to become a Physician's Assistant, and talks about how her study abroad experience made her stand out from the crowd while interviewing for PA school. We discuss cross cultural communication, learning a second language, and making connections abroad. Let's go to our conversation with Elise now.

Z: Hi Elise, how are you doing today?

Elise (E): I'm good, how are you?

Z: Doing well. We're excited to talk to you about your experience today. So to start us off can you introduce yourself to our listeners?

E: Yeah so my name is Elise. I graduated in 2019 from FSU so I was a FYA student from 2016 to 2017 and was able to graduate early still and now I am in Gainesville I kinda traded a little, traded teams but FSU's still number one in my heart but I'm studying to be a PA which is essentially a Masters in Medicine and I studied when I was an FYA I studied both in Valencia and in Panama.

H: Wonderful. Can you tell us a bit about how your study abroad experience has helped you to get to where you are now?

E: I would argue that it's one of the main reasons I am where I am now. I'm actually the youngest in my class which is huge and I'm 22. So most people in my class are between the ages of 25 and 30 and what they look for in our interviews is life experience and my life experiences that they liked were my study abroad experiences, just how I interacted with all these different cultures throughout college, and that's really what I was asked at my interview here at UF. And then I also was very fortunate to receive a full scholarship to go to PA school and that was through the National Health Service Corps. So this is a government program that will pay for my tuition and in exchange I'll work for them for two years in a federally underserved community. And this also goes hand in hand with working with people from different cultures because a lot of people who are underserved are minority populations and they have different ethnic backgrounds so my demonstrated ability in college definitely helped me land these opportunities that I have right now and the fact that I can start so young. One of my interviewers said she saw a lot of maturity in me, she had no idea that I was 22 when I was interviewing because I had so much like world and life experience that she was really impressed.

Z: That's so awesome. We always say that you know study abroad will make you stand out from the crowd and your story is evidence that that is the case. And can you talk about what skills you gained while living in Spain and Panama that you think will benefit you in your career?

E: Definitely practicing my Spanish was definitely one of the hallmarks of going abroad for me. That was one of my goals was to be more fluent and more comfortable in using Spanish. And I think that will definitely help me here in Florida especially if I'm working as a provider because I've already had to use Spanish. We have a free clinic here at UF and mostly all of the patients are Spanish speaking so that has definitely helped me. And I also think working with different cultures when I was abroad has helped me because like for example there are some cultures that don't know that they need to make appointments for medical visits because they're used to just waiting outside in a line to see a doctor. So being able to communicate, like recognize the cultural differences, and communicate to those kinds of patients definitely helps a lot as opposed to just getting frustrated with them for showing up without an appointment. But I think just living around so many different cultures has helped me recognize that this could be a cultural difference so let's figure, let's get to the bottom of it.

H: That's such a great perspective, like you said you don't always need to get frustrated, you learn a lot of things while you're studying abroad and learn about yourself and about other communities and cultures and patience is a huge lesson we learn while studying abroad. So we know that you went back to Panama after you studied abroad there, can you talk a little bit about what led you to that decision and then what that experience going back to Panama was like?

E: Yeah so one of our last excursions and I'm trying to remember which one it was specifically but the tour guide had mentioned something that he worked for a company called Floating Doctors which is a nonprofit organization and I did some more research about this company and I was like nearing the end of my study abroad experience so I wasn't able to go when I was there abroad but I definitely had my sights on it. So I saved up money for the whole next year and I went back to Panama to work for this Floating Doctors company that the tour guide had mentioned and it ended up being a great experience. I did some public health research there actually about women's health and the importance of prenatal care and it was a really big adventure. I canoed, well they call it a cayuco which is not really a canoe, but the boat ride took five hours to get to the island that we set up our for our mission trip and then we slept in hammocks which was something very new to me, in the Panama heat and we were advised also not to bathe in the river because of potential parasites or things that we could get so I also didn't shower for five days which was you know interesting but it was a great experience. I saw so many different cases that I don't think I would have seen here in the US and I was able to help so many different people and so I'm glad that I met that that random tour guide in Panama to help me just decide you know this is kind of what I want to do, which is medicine.

H: You never know who you're going to meet abroad.

E: Yeah you never do, you never know.

Z: Definitely. So shifting a little bit but can you talk about your experience doing the Global Citizenship Certificate.

H: Yeah actually the Global Citizenship Certificate is kind of what helped me reflect more on my abroad experiences. So like I said I did public health research in Panama but I wasn't really able to pull it all

together until I did the Global Citizenship Certificate and so there I was paired, I had a mentor, a faculty member, who helped me do literature reviews and kind of compile all of the different research that I had done and put it in a like case study and then I did a poster presentation at the Undergraduate Research Symposium which was a really neat experience. And so yeah they kind of helped me reflect on the importance of like getting to know different cultures and knowing your culture specifically so that you can recognize that there's a difference. And so we took, there were a couple of classes that were required where we learned about things like power distance and how certain cultures are less likely to ask questions in class but they might come up after to the teacher to ask questions because that's just how the culture is. And so those kinds of examples made me think about the people I've met in my experience and why they may be acting that way, if it's different in the way I'm acting, and it really helped me. It really helped me.

H: Do you think that some of those things like the research that you did or the reflection that you did throughout that certificate program, do you see that impacting where you are now or your future career or anything like that?

E: It definitely helps me recognize and be able to write about it too because I think that my essays for the scholarship in particular I think I was able to reflect more profoundly and that specific knowing the cultural differences and being able to recognize that and how to overcome those kinds of challenges. I have not started my clinical year yet but I imagine that when I'm in my clinical year I'll come across some of these situations where I'll have to physically overcome like different challenges, like for example like I said the people just showing up the doctors appointments because that's how in their country they just wait for hours to see a doctor but they'll wait the whole day, that's fine. Whereas here in the US if you don't have an appointment, you're kind of out of luck and you get you get sent home and you're like they tell you to call again. So but just I know I'll come across more of the situations it just hasn't happened yet because I'm kind of I'm in the didactic phase of my learning but when clinical year comes around I'm excited for any challenges.

Z: Yeah that's really cool.

H: I like that you mentioned the writing for your applications and things like that because sometimes we have these experiences in life whether they're abroad or otherwise and you think yeah that was a cool experience but you don't really like take a second to like sit and reflect and like really think about what that experience meant for you, or how it changed you, or what you experienced, and so things like the Global Citizenship Certificate or the Garnet and Gold Scholar Society, things like that that really facilitate that deep reflection and understanding what it is that you accomplished can really help later down the road when you're writing scholarship applications or grad school applications or in a job interview or something like that so I'm glad that you had that experience.

E: Yeah I remember actually filling out, for the Global Citizenship Certificate we did a sheet about how privileged we were. And I had never thought about it before because I don't know, I just you go through life, you don't think about how privileged you are. But then when I filled out the sheet I was like "Oh my gosh, I come from so much privilege" and I just like it just surprised me to see that most of my, some of my classmates were checking different answers than I was and I felt like, I was very surprised but I also was very motivated to help people that weren't, that didn't come from the same background of privilege. So I bring that up in a lot of interviews because they ask you know, "why you want to work with

underserved populations?" And it's because I've always, I've never known that people have gone through life so underprivileged and I want to help.

H: Yah it's important to be able to recognize that within ourselves and then to be an advocate and to use that privilege for good, like to create good out of it, and to use the privilege that you have to help others like you said. So that's awesome that you also have that experience through the Global Citizenship Certificate to help you be a better practitioner and that's wonderful. So we're going to shift a little bit for some fun questions so let's talk a little bit about your study abroad experience. We've talked a lot about your career and the experiences you've had but let's talk about your time actually abroad. So first, can you tell us what was your favorite excursion or your favorite memory from your time in Panama?

E: In Panama, let's think, there are so many of them and I like Panama because most of the excursions were outside and I'm very much an outdoors person. I like to be around mountains, beaches, in the sun, I like to be active, so I think my favorite one was we did an overnight excursion to sort of this like isolated island called Contadora which was it just felt like we were the only people on the island which is really cool but, I think there were a couple other like couples at the resort that we were at. But we essentially just got the whole time to explore. So I think myself and a couple of friends rented a golf cart, we were able to explore like these isolated beaches, these deserted beaches that had shipwrecks on them and things like that and so that was my favorite excursion because we got to spend a lot of time in a place where I feel like not many humans have touched and that's just a cool feeling you know you see those places like those pictures in magazines that you're like "Oh my gosh I would dream to go to a place like that!," and I felt like I was in there and that was a really cool experience. And then in Valencia, I again I really like being outside, so they did an excursion we could go ziplining outside of Madrid I think it was and that was a really cool experience just to zip line over like all the trees and stuff.

Z: Yeah absolutely, I studied abroad in Costa Rica and we went ziplining and that was also one of my favorite excursions, it's just so fun.

E: Yeah I was scared at first, I was definitely scared to jump because you know I don't know like you're thinking "oh what happens if I'm the one that like the faulty equipment is on?," but you're like, you can't go through life thinking like that, so you know that initial jump was hard but it was very, very fun.

Z: Yeah that's a great metaphor for study abroad. The initial jump can be difficult but then it turns out to be fun and a great experience.

E: Exactly.

Z: So our last question that we have for you is a question that we ask everyone who comes on the podcast. What advice do you have for students considering study abroad?

E: Especially for me as a STEM major, in Biology, I was very hesitant to study abroad because I wasn't sure if it would fit in my timeline the way I wanted it to. I really wanted to do it but it wasn't like one of the check boxes that I had to check if I wanted to go to Med school or PA school so if you don't think it's going to fit in your timeline, I think you should try to make it. That's my best advice, it's just you're only like this age once and I don't know I think it's the most fun to study when you're young and you can experience everything, you have in your mobility, you can walk everywhere, it takes awhile for you to get tired, I don't know I wouldn't take it back even if, and it did not set me back at all I still was able to graduate

within three years which was my goal because I had a bunch of extra credit and I actually think that it helped me get exactly where I am today because of the life experience that I got from it and yeah.

H: Absolutely we hear from STEM students a lot that it can be it can seem intimidating or just like it won't really quite fit and to all of those students we always say just meet with our office, we have an academic advisor who can go through the courses, if you're an incoming student who can go through the credit that you're bringing into FSU, if you are already enrolled she can look at all of your courses that you've taken and where it can fit in, and she's, I mean she's amazing. She can usually find a program or some sort of opportunity that will fit for just about every student that asks so please take advantage of those resources.

E: Yeah the science classes there are there just like FSU's like on main campus in Tallahassee. I actually they were smaller so I learned more I feel like then when I came back to Tallahassee and sat in a lecture of 300 people and I was like, oh my gosh I don't know how I'm supposed to go up to this professor I'm 1 out of 300 people to ask questions, like in Valencia it was like 5 people in my class. So yeah it's definitely in good way to ease yourself in, especially for the FYAs to ease yourself into your first year, because you do get like more one on one attention, academically.

Z: Exactly. You know, we say that a lot too. That you know, class sizes are smaller abroad so you get that one on one time with your professor and you're able to actually get to know them which is a huge advantage I think.

E: Yeah it is a huge advantage.

Z: Well thank you for joining us today on the podcast. You know it was our pleasure to talk to you and we had a great time.

E: Yeah thank you so much for having me!

H: Thanks Elise!

Z: Before we disembark, we want to talk about how you can stand out from the crowd when you study abroad.

Once you return from your study abroad experience, it is important to reflect on the experience you had and what it meant to you. Knowing how your study abroad experience influenced you can help you know how to talk about it on your resume or in a job interview.

H: FSU offers many ways for you to continue your international education and reflection, even once you return stateside. The Center for Global Engagement offers the Global Citizenship Certificate that Elise mentioned. This program allows you to take courses and participate in cultural engagement opportunities, culminating in a notation on your final transcript.

The Garnet and Gold Scholar Society is another opportunity to consider. You can choose "International" as one of your focus areas and after completing the required reflections you could be inducted into the scholar society when you graduate.

Another resource to take advantage of as an FSU student is the Career Center. The advisors in the Career Center can help you talk about your experience in a job interview and more. You can also check out our

YouTube channel for a presentation on how to add your study abroad experience to your resume! Check out the show notes for a link!

Z: Thanks for listening, and thanks to Elise for talking with us today!

H: This podcast is a production of FSU International Programs. The music for this podcast was composed by John Bartmann. Our logo was designed by Vanessa Guirey, who also does our sound engineering. Editing, transcription, and research is done by us, Hannah Meister and Zoë Crook.

Show Notes

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