

SE03EP08

A STEM Major Abroad

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 today's episode, we talk to Daniel De Santiago, a First Semester Abroad alum who studied abroad in London. Daniel is studying chemistry and talks about his experience as a STEM major abroad. We hear about how the facilities enhanced his learning, how London's museums brought the curriculum to life, and the fun Daniel had while exploring England's soccer culture. Let's go to our conversation with Daniel now.

Z: Hi Daniel, how are you doing today?

Dan (D): Good, how you doing?

Z: Doing well! So first off, can you just introduce yourself to our listeners?

D: Of course. My name is Dan De Santiago, I'm a Chemistry major at Florida State and I had the amazing opportunity to study abroad my first semester of college in the Fall of 2019 in London, England.

H: So you're a chemistry major, can you talk about what it was like to study abroad I STEM major?

D: Being a Chem major, my first semester of college it was very nervous, nerve wrecking, to go into it and not know what to expect. But studying abroad in London made it easy and more comfortable and made going into my major more exciting. Just because once I got there, my professor Cheryl was just so excited and passionate about chemistry that she made learning from her very easy and also it was much easier to learn from her when I only had nine other people in my class. So that was amazing to see, you know once I got to meet everybody in my class, I also had better relationship with Cheryl. Being a chemistry major, you also have labs and I did not see any labs in the FSU London facility but it was amazing because they took us to a local college, called Birkbeck, and there we got to do all out amazing labs. We got to meet the lab technician there named Dom, and they took us step by step through each lab we had each week. And also while we were there we got to meet other students who went to Birkbeck and also sometimes we crossed paths with other FSU London STEM programs like the biology course they have there. Honestly overall it was a great experience just because they were introducing us to college, introducing us to medicine, excuse me, to chemistry and like areas where medicine, biology and other STEM problems are happening and it just made me more excited to be a chemistry major and also more excited to be in London at that moment learning about something that I am going to take into a future career and something I am really passionate about now, so it was all amazing honestly.

Z: That's cool. It's neat that you got to go to a different facility to experience that and study elsewhere outside of FSU London but also we want to hear a little bit more about FSU London itself and the facilities there. So how did the facilities at the study center help enhance your study abroad experience and learning?

D: Honestly at first the whole facility itself was amazing just because FSU London is so big and so many different buildings that all connect underground. And I'm going to be perfectly honest, the first few weeks I almost opened Google Maps up just to navigate even though I knew it wasn't going to help. But honestly, the facilities were amazing and it was also big enough to help give us locations for all the other STEM programs that were happening there just because there were math courses happening there, biology courses happening there, chemistry courses happening there and with all these students trying to learn these subjects, you know study for their exams it was hard to, I thought it was going to be hard to, find locations but FSU London, they had multiple rooms with white boards in them that all we had to do was go reserve a room and then we'll go, three other buddies of mine who were in the chemistry program, we'd take up that room for a few hours and we would study our courses there. And honestly it made learning the material with each other much easier and it also was good because we got to write it out on white boards, wipe it away and we had multiple moments where. We went into those rooms and it was just a great experience. And also they had two computers labs and doing labs, we had to do lab reports so honestly you would find me and a few other buddies there for the other hours we weren't in the regular rooms using the white boards and honestly it was so much easier than I thought it would be, you know, once I got the hang of it. Logging in, printing stuff out, you know sometimes I would run into other kids who were in there trying to do their biology reports or some other group studies trying to learn how to do the Pre-Algebra classes or the Trig classes. It was just a great study environment and I'm one that also needs like quiet and they had a lot of areas and rooms where students could just go and have quiet time away from the big study groups and I think I credit that to the amazing time and also the amazing work that I got to accomplish while I was in London and at the end of the semester it showed all that studying, having those facilities really benefited me and my education while I was over there at FSU London.

H: That's great that there was a balance where you could find the group study space, where you could be together, do some problems together, but then also have some more quiet spaces. So that's awesome those facilities were there and it works for both types of studiers, or people who like a little bit of both.

D: It was amazing.

H: So going out into the city, so we've talked about the facility, we've talked about the study center, how did the city and it's museums enhance your learning as a STEM student?

D: Honestly, biggest flex London has, maybe other places have, but like their museums being free, most of them being free that you could walk in was just amazing. Now I got to go every week to a museum with FSU London because I took a philosophy class and honestly I think it was my favorite part of the week just because, one exploring the city of course but two, every time my professor would take us out to these different museums and it wasn't just the same ones all the time. We were literally walking to different areas of London it would be 5 minutes walks, not even two minutes to the British Museum, or sometimes it would be like 15 minute walks, and there were some Tube rides, to some medicine museum that you know, you would never find if you were just a tourist there but honestly the most beneficial part about is even though I was taking a philosophy course, you know it was great to do for my Gen Ed classes, it was a fun class to take, every time we would go there, we would only be there for philosophy for about 15 minutes and then she'll let us loose, make us find our way back, and that was the perfect opportunity for me to explore these museums to see how one, they benefited philosophy but two, how they benefited me as a chemistry/STEM major and see what other things I could learn from there. Honestly it was the

best experience like most museums had like historical information and went into the all these other subjects that I don't really understand but, when I was there I did find myself into the room that was related to science, that was related to some type of maybe medicine or you know I do like stars, stuff that was related to astronomy and stuff like that and it was honestly a great experience and I got to round out my knowledge on things that I wouldn't think I would see or know or hear about unless I went to these museums so overall I, hats off to this professor for getting us out of the room, really like letting us dive into the course material and the knowledge and not just sitting in classroom looking at a PowerPoint or reading a book, we were really using the city and what the city had to provide as a classroom and it was just really amazing, an amazing experience to have.

Z: That's great that you're able to, you know, go outside of the classroom like you said and really explore beyond philosophy too. It's cool that you were able to take some stuff from your science classes and apply that in the museum and what you were learning.

D: Yah, it was amazing.

Z: Next we want to hear about what did you learn through your study abroad experience that you think will help you in your future endeavors?

D: I think the biggest thing I like to joke around is being able to, you know, use my internal map and find my way back. I think one of the biggest things I took out of there just because you know, not all the time the Wi-Fi or my phone plan was working so I literally had to put my phone down, look at these street signs, backtrack where I came from, where I was going, to find my way back to study center or to the museum I was in, or the coffee shop I decided to go to on Saturday or Sunday evening just to relax. But I really like learned how to go out and try to explore the beauties that either the city I was in, which was London, had or any other location I went to had. Just because my mindset there was just to you know stay with the program, stay with the flow, make sure I keep myself organized, that not to stray away but the moments I found myself straying away really bringing in the beauty of the city itself, bringing in all the culture, the education, the traditions they had to bring in. Every time I stepped off the sidewalk to concentrate on the direction I didn't like know where I was going, I witnessed something beautiful. And honestly I do take that into the way I live now and into the time I do have in Tallahassee just because when I see, you know, a random tabling event on Landis or a random club doing something weird there even though I know I'm heading to a direction, headed to either a meeting or a class right now, I always find myself back in London, needing to go explore and see what those kids who are fighting on Landis are doing, or to see what this tabling event is because honestly every time I go and have those little small conversations, thinking I'm in London, having those like little weird moments with people from different parts of London, or the world, I really like witness something beautiful and I really take something out of it even though it's just a conversation, or they give me a pamphlet or whatever it is, honestly it's those little small moments that you know built up my experience when I was in London also what I take back here, back home.

H: That's such a cool reflection on kind of expectations. A lot of times we go in thinking okay, I'm going to go study abroad, I'm going to do my classes, I'm going to get good grades, I'm going to come back with that GPA and then you get there and start experiencing things and you're like wait maybe this is a little different than what I thought it was going to be and it could apply to a lot of things. Like maybe you're really nervous to go abroad and then you get there and you're like wait there's people here to support me, there's really cool things to do there's nothing to be nervous about. So it's a cool thing, like you're

going out with one set of expectations and you come out totally different, so that's awesome. Our next question for you is what kind of things did you do for fun around London? How did you get involved in the local culture?

D: Besides having my daily park like searches where I'd just try to find a weird park or a local park and just sit there and see what was going on, whether it was just like a swarm of bike riders or you know people you know doing speeches like when I went to Speaker's Corner at Hyde Park. But honestly, I'm a soccer guy so embracing that culture of London was a big part of my experience there. Whether it was one, we played a soccer match in London. It was FSU London against NYU London and we, I don't know how they did it but the wonderful staff there coordinated a time and a place together and we got to go on a match, the two schools against each other. I don't know I felt a little like DI athlete in there, you know, representing FSU as a Seminole. But it was a great time I got to play soccer in London where it was like having a little like crazy, freak out, living the dream right there. Of course, FSU came out 4-1, it was fun like that, you know, Go Noles, casual.

H: Casual.

D: Besides that it was also going to experience the professional side of soccer. And going, me and two other buddies going to a national soccer game, England against Montenegro and honestly just sitting there just listening to the fans around me passionate about their country, passionate about the sport of soccer, you know, England killed that game. But they had their chants, they had their cheers, they had the you know little sayings in there. I think my favorite thing was trying to pick it up, you know, in the first few minutes of game and then try to act myself as if I go to these games all the time, trying to pick up the lingo and the slang and trying to you know really immerse myself and become a Londoner, which was the big thing I did take out of it. So honestly the soccer culture was it. And it ranged from me playing, from me watching at the actual stadium or me just going to a pub and watching with the other people who are not at the game, not playing, just sitting down watching the game on TV. Actually putting myself out there, actually experiencing all of soccer, not just the peewee soccer I played back home so it was amazing.

Z: That's so fun. It sounds like the energy was just amazing, going to the game, and even playing in the game, just all around. I know that you know soccer, futbol is a really big deal over there so that's really fun. Our last question is something that we ask everyone on this podcast, but we just want to know what advice you have for students who are considering studying abroad?

D: Stop considering it and go. Honestly that's like the biggest thing I could tell any student our any parent who doesn't know whether to send their student. Honestly, it's kind of a leap of faith you don't know what to expect but I didn't know what I was going to expect going in there just me saying alright it's time to go and see what other beauties are in this world, to go meet new people, to go see different cultures. Honestly that was the best thing, just for a second I stopped thinking and started just to pursue, feel what I wanted to do in the future and know that there is more than just Florida out there and I benefited greatly. My parents see a difference, my friends see a difference, I see a difference in myself just by going and studying abroad for those few months and honestly the opportunity that Florida State gave me, can't be so grateful for it and honestly people just decide to turn off their minds and feel what they want and go and study abroad they are really going to get a benefit from it throughout their whole lives. Honestly I know I have, it was great.

Z: That's such great advice.

H: Yah, thank you so much for that advice and thank you for sharing your time with us today Daniel, we really appreciate it.

D: Appreciate it. Thank you guys so much for having me. I always love talking about study abroad so I would talk about it all day if I had to so thank you!

Z: Thank you!

Z: Before we disembark, we want to talk about the First Semester and First Year Abroad programs. As you've heard on this episode and others, FSU international Programs offers two programs for first year students where they can spend their first semester or whole first year abroad. FSU is ranked in the top three nationally for long-term study abroad programs, and these programs allow students to start their college experience in another culture learning from world-class faculty, earning FSU credit, and making lifelong friends.

H: For First Year Abroad students, there is an opportunity for out of state students to earn an in-state tuition waiver for the remainder of their undergraduate degree by successfully completing the FYA program. Florida residents can also earn a scholarship towards their FYA experience. If you're interested in learning more about these two programs before the May 1st deadline, be sure to check out our website or email us at IP-Freshmen@fsu.edu.

Z: Thanks to Daniel for sharing his story with us today, and thanks to all of you for listening!

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.