

Jane Doe

Application Supplement: Academic Career Interruption

While completing my undergraduate program at UCLA I took a temporary leave of absence twice to pursue study abroad opportunities. The timeline and circumstances are detailed below.

Spring 2002

In January 2002, I arrived at the Universidad Central in Venezuela for a yearlong study abroad program. Unfortunately, the political situation there deteriorated and by April 2002, when the State Department issued a travel advisory for Venezuela, UCLA decided to cancel the program. Although the coup attempt was certainly in the news each day, my study site in Ciudad Bolívar was rather removed from the violence, and I continued to feel safe in the city. I was also very devoted to the rural organizations that I had discovered and was reluctant to give up the valuable volunteer work I was doing. I learned about an internship program with Progreso Rural, a capacity-building center for social change organizations in Venezuela funded by the South American Foundation. After some consideration, I accepted the internship and spent the rest of the year focusing on work empowering rural community groups. The program offered me housing in a modest apartment building usually reserved for NGO workers and, though I had to take leave from UCLA, I was able to remain in Venezuela for the full period I had come for.

Fall 2003

At the end of August 2003, I returned to California and enrolled in classes to continue my degree. It took me some time to recognize that I was suffering from mild depression, a condition exacerbated by the reverse culture shock of returning home after a transformational year abroad in Venezuela. Midway through the semester, I sought advice at the UCLA Health Center and began seeing a personal counselor. That was of great help, but the heavy course load I had enrolled for began to take its toll. I decided the best way forward was to withdraw for the semester, take some personal time and acclimate myself completely, and then return to UCLA the next semester. I am proud to say that I made the right choice, and with more than a full course load in Spring 2003, I achieved a semester GPA average of 3.87.