

Retreat Experience

I was nervous to attend the retreat; I felt as though I was the “odd one out” because I knew that my experience was going to be perceived and articulated differently than my peers. I was also questioning whether I should truly pursue the double major, or if I even deserved it. I left feeling a little more at ease with my decision and was able to grapple with my experience, the good and bad. I was able to celebrate with others my progress, and to have a listening ear.

I really enjoyed the ease of the retreat. No parts of the experience felt rushed, which I enjoyed. I appreciated having our own personal rooms, and being able to eat out. I find I have the best conversations over good food. Although I was so nervous to be in the conversation groups and speak in the language we learned, I found that it was not as anxiety-inducing as I had thought. I did not feel pressured to speak too much, and I also did not feel that I was shamed for my level of speaking. I enjoyed the games we had as a group. I did not know the other ACA goers (except for the Argentina goers). I thought the location was perfect, and the amount of time the retreat was also perfect (although a part two is always suggested)!

My suggestions for the next retreat would be to have more people present. I noticed some of my friends who had done ACA were not there. I also would have loved to be split in small groups not just according to country, just to have a deeper conversation and understanding of others' experiences. I think that it would have been helpful to have this retreat before my travels. I found that the information from the reading would have been beneficial before my travels. I think a retreat before, and a retreat after the experience would be most beneficial. Since this was my first time out of the United States and not having anyone in my family who speaks a second language, I think I could have benefited from more education and preparation before my trip. I think it would also be interesting to have time to prepare a small presentation with pictures and

present it to each other. I found that when I was able to compile pictures, I was able to remember all of the good memories. I am going to a Southern Connections class and advocating for students to do ACA, and I think having a conversation about how to get the word out about ACA would be beneficial. I am grateful for this retreat and all of those that were present!