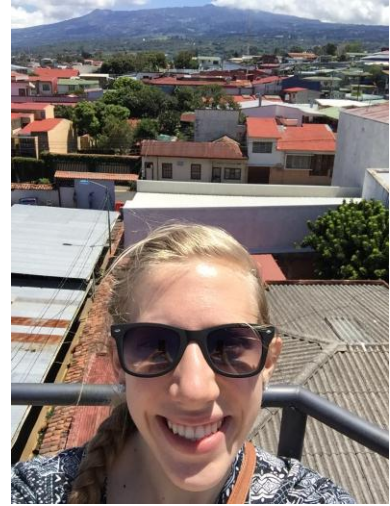


College of Education: Costa Rica Summer 2016

By: Anna Yates

The decision to go abroad was a difficult one. The farthest I had ever travelled was to Miami, Florida on a family vacation when I was a senior in high school. Even more nerve-wracking was having my last foreign language course as a junior in high school. I was also nervous because I knew studying abroad could possibly mean pushing me back in my coursework if I had taken a semester trip. I also knew my parents would be hesitant letting me go abroad, heck, I had never even driven to ISU by myself before! All doubts aside, I made the decision to study abroad with the College of Education during the summer of 2016. The destination was Costa Rica and the timeframe was only two weeks. It ended up being the most exciting two weeks of my life so far.



I was still nervous until the time I was safe in my host family's house the night I arrived in Heredia, Costa Rica. I was so nervous going through the airport and thinking of all of the things that could go wrong on the trip like missing flights, getting lost, or having money stolen. Thankfully, none of the latter happened and the trip was surprisingly relaxing. I think one of the reasons I enjoyed the trip so much was the fact that everything was on a schedule. This one reason I chose this trip as well, it was faculty lead and I would have something productive to do instead of wandering around an unfamiliar place.

More familiarity was found on the trip due to the fact we were visiting schools. School is a place I have always felt comfortable, thus my decision to go into Early Childhood education. However, going into the schools in Costa Rica allowed me to see the differences with the United States, as well as other schools in different areas of the country. It was so interesting to see how much variety there were in the schools, even if they were only a few miles from one another. As a future educator, I will remember the school visits because they allowed me to see how students can thrive in all sorts of environments and make the most of the educational resources they are given.



School visits aside, I felt like I conquered a lot of my fears on this trip. I am an extremely indecisive person as it is, so making the decision to go abroad was a miracle in itself. I also did things I only thought adventurous, outgoing, or extraverted people do, and I would not use any of the previous adjectives to describe myself. I went ziplining in the forest, horseback riding in the mountains, and tried speaking in Spanish as much as I could. I did all of these things because I had a voice in the back of my head saying, "If you don't do it now, when will you have the chance again?" This statement is what gave me the push to go and I am so thankful I was able to push myself out of my



comfort zone and go abroad. I know there is a cliché about going abroad and "you'll regret it when you are older", but I have to agree. I cannot think of another time right now when I would have been able to go abroad and truly enjoy myself. I only had three weeks from the end of school and my summer job, but I was able to fill two of them with experiences I never would have thought possible. Studying abroad allowed me to get out of my comfort zone, form friendships with other future educators, experience another culture's education system, as well as develop a mindfulness of the world around me. I will carry the motto "Pura Vida", which is Costa Rican for "Pure Life", with me from now on, because it reminds me to take it easy and enjoy whatever life has in store.