A Parents Perspective of Study Abroad SYE
By Mary Levine

My three students wanted to take advantage of the study abroad programs while they were at USD. With one of the most renowned programs in the nation, we were hoping that we could find an experience to accommodate our students' schedules. My son was a member of the football team and one of my daughters was on the cross country and track team. Because of their sports schedules, a normal semester abroad was not possible. The Second Year Experience (SYE) and the Intersession program was just what my children wanted. Offered to USD sophomores, the Second Year Experience (SYE) is a three week program that takes place between the fall and spring semesters. My twin daughters, now graduates of USD, were part of the inaugural program in 2011. This program is unique in its approach to the entire experience of studying abroad. Students apply for the program in their freshman year and then attend a Global Studies seminar to prepare for their time abroad. These seminars, which group students by location of study, are led by a USD Student Affairs staff member who meets with students before their departure, on-site in each location and at USD upon their return. The three credit courses are taught by a USD faculty member and will fulfill a core curriculum requirement. My daughters chose to study in Barcelona, Spain. My son, who was a junior at the time, was able to attend an Intersession program that was also being held in Barcelona. The Intersession program, held at the same time, was perfect for my son who could study abroad but not miss any of his sports commitments.

I still remember dropping the three of them off at LAX and watching their plane take off. We had travelled as a family to many parts of the world but it was hard to send them off on their own. We waited for the phone call that they had landed and had made their way to their dorms at the University of Barcelona. After one day to acclimate to the 9 hour time change their classes began. Courses such as Spanish, ethics, and religion were offered to the students. The three hours of class work was often followed by field trips around Barcelona which included the Picasso and Dali Museums. Culturally enriching field trips were also included which took students to the outlying communities of Girona, Tarragona and Valencia. The students were treated to a class in creating tapas dishes and even attended a FC Barcelona soccer game.

When not on USD-led field trips, most students explored the city. It was amazing to me, when I talked to my children during their trip, how comfortable they had become in a foreign city. Talking in "Euros" and taking the "metro" they were very excited to take advantage of being in such a historic and vibrant community. They were even able to experience the Spanish Christmas celebration, which took place on January 6. When I picked my children up at the airport in San Diego, I greeted three very confident, self-assured, worldly and changed individuals. They had an amazing time and I feel very fortunate that they were able to have this experience.

One of my daughters loved the study abroad program so much that she decided that a Summer Session in London was in order. That summer, we put her on a plane for London where she stayed at Queen Mary University of London. She took the London Plays in Production course taught by USD professors Dr. Hay and Dr. Caywood. Classic and current plays were part of curriculum and she absolutely had an amazing time. She and another student also took the Eurostar (Chunnel) to Paris and explored the City of Lights for a weekend. Now a seasoned traveler, she decided that a second summer in London was necessary. The following summer, she again stayed at Queen Mary University and took British Media Studies. Trips to the BBC, and the studio where Harry Potter was filmed were just a few of
the experiences she had. This time, she and a few classmates explored Scotland when they had a free weekend. Did the Study Abroad program at USD make an impact on my students' time at USD? Absolutely! I would highly recommend any student take advantage of the study abroad courses. An opportunity to see other cultures and live in other environments really does open up an entire world. My students truly did have an enriching experience studying abroad and I cannot say enough about the study abroad staff. For more information about the USD Study Abroad programs visit www.sandiego.edu/StudyAbroad.