

Example of Community Responsibility, Global Citizenship/ Intercultural Competency and Experiential/Service Learning

The easiest way to write the essay is to have separate sections, each with its own subheading, for the 5 different dimensions of your BC experience. But you don't have to do it that way. Here the student is combining reflections on community responsibility, global citizenship and experiential learning in the same section. If you do not organize your essay into five, clearly marked sections, then make sure that you refer to each dimension by name to make it clear where you are addressing each one. If your grader is unable to distinguish clearly between sections then there may be a resulting loss of points.

The first class I ever walked into at Bridgewater College was, in many ways, one of the most important classes I ever took in my time here, especially in relation to my development as a citizen. I was terrified walking in on the first day because it was an upper-level Spanish class, and I had not taken Spanish in a couple years. The class was called “Hispanics in the U.S.” with Dr. Morton. I already had a significant interest in immigration from a policy perspective from my time in competitive debate in high school, but I had not connected with the issue on a personal, human level. In the class we read a book by Jorge Ramos entitled *La Otra Cara de América*, which means “the other face of America.” For me, that is what the book provided, a look at other faces. As I laboriously read the stories of immigrants’ experiences, I began to see the people and not just policy. For my third weekly journal in the class, I considered for the first time pursuing a career related to immigration issues—whether from a policy, legal, or social perspective.

The course challenged me academically—my lowest grade for all three years was in that class—but it also motivated me to learn Spanish and become more involved in the immigrant community. My sophomore year I brought a car on campus, which opened up more opportunities for me to become involved with the community beyond the campus. I excitedly signed up to help with the after-school program and ESL classes that my church provides for the impoverished immigrant trailer park behind the church building (See Service Learning Docs). I continue volunteering with the programs even now. Harrisonburg is a city full of immigrants and refugees, and many people believe that these individuals from different places are not part of the community because they cannot become citizens. And while it is true that some of these people will not or cannot become citizens, thinking of citizenship as an active process broadens the idea of community to where it is not just about labels.

The experiences I have had volunteering may never have happened if it were not for Dr. Morton’s class. Both the academic experiences reading about the immigrant community and the actual times participating in the community have helped me understand policy. It is impossible to understand and make good policies without understanding how it affects people. Knowing a person who faces the reality of the American immigration system everyday and knowing a kid who would benefit from legislation like the DREAM Act helps me evaluate such issues better. This past summer I interned at a small immigration law firm. One of my assignments was researching a “cancellation of removal” case for a woman who was put in deportation proceedings due to a shoplifting charge. In order to have her deportation order “cancelled,” she would have to prove “exceptional and extremely unusual hardship” to her U.S. citizen immediate family members. In her case, those family members were two children under six years old. As I worked on that case, I could not help but picture the faces of my favorite children in the after-

school program whose parents could just as easily have been in the same situation. Some would say these personal experiences should be kept out of policy matters, but I think as a Political Science major, it is important to not always separate the two realms because policies have tangible effects on people's lives that should not be ignored. Opponents to comprehensive immigration reform and bills like the DREAM act tend to rationalize the issues and recall the past: "they broke the law" or "they drain society." Yet a leap of faith would ask us to see people as Jesus did, in the image of God, which brings about a certain type of empathy. Obviously not everyone shares the same religious beliefs, but this leap of faith still relates to my personal understanding and motivation for citizenship.

In the fall of 2011 I took World Politics with Dr. Frueh. In that class we discussed the theory of cosmopolitanism, which sees all humans as free and equal individuals and claims our similarities are more important than our differences. The idea seeks to promote universal human rights and global citizenship. The concept of "global citizenship" sounds appealing, but it also is a little hard to wrap one's head around. I immediately liked the term, but I can't say that I really understood it. In January of my sophomore year, I suddenly decided it was not worth it to learn Spanish if I was not going to learn it all the way. With that new goal, I quickly got all the forms together to apply for studying abroad in a Spanish-speaking country, and by August 2012, I was in Chile for the fall semester. There, I was able to be part of a global community, literally, with friends from many different countries and backgrounds. Even though I did not do community service abroad in the same way I do at home, I became a global citizen by learning to appreciate other cultures and engaging in cross-cultural civil discourse. I joined my German and English friends watching the U.S. presidential debates, which we later discussed with my Chilean host family. Many Americans act as if the United States is the center of the universe; for them, other countries are just colored shapes on maps. I think being part of the global community requires an extra amount of empathy and moral imagination in order to understand world events from a variety of perspectives. Studying abroad also gave me a practical tool for global citizenship: a new language. This has been an important tool for understanding Hispanics in the United States because it enables communication. Direct, rather than mediated communication, will always be more effective in communicating both meaning and emotion. A woman in the ESL for Spanish speakers class I will be teaching next semester told me she is glad I will be teaching the class because sometimes she or others have questions, but they cannot even ask their questions because they do not know how in English. Thus learning a language is a tool for expanding one's community and living as a citizen.