

Kumasi, Ghana

Amy Ballard



Program: Global Public Health in Ghana, Summer 2018

Majors: Pre-Medicine and International Studies

Earning the Career Development Badge:



Since I can remember, I have always wanted to become a doctor and travel internationally to provide medical care to those in underdeveloped countries, particularly in Africa. Going on this learning abroad experience with the University of Utah and getting to meet the doctors who run this program personally was more than I ever could've hoped for. Having the opportunity to go abroad and participate in medical research projects in Ghana was a dream come true by itself. Having that opportunity while also getting to know Doctors Benson and Dickerson personally, people who do every day what I've been dreaming about since I was a kid, was absolutely surreal. I decided to go on this learning abroad as a trial run to see if working as a doctor internationally is something that I really want to do with my life. I now know that my answer is a resounding "YES!" I cannot imagine doing anything else.

Earning the Research Experience Badge:



As a pre-med student, you know that you need to rack up some research experience in order to get into med school. For most, that means sitting in a lab, isolating a specific molecule or something of the like. For me, that meant travelling across the world to Ghana in Western Africa. While in Ghana, I had the opportunity to spend hours in the KNUST Teaching Hospital in Kumasi, Ghana performing

interviews and talking to doctors, to watch a 3 month old have surgery to repair a cleft lip, to go out into the rural Ghanaian communities and collect samples to test for antibiotic resistance. These experiences, along with so many more, are things that I never would've had if I had chosen not to participate in this learning abroad program. I would go again in a heartbeat.

Transferable Skills:



My main research project in Ghana was a cleft palate study. For this study, I had the opportunity to work with a group of Ghanaian medical students to interview caregivers of children with cleft lip and/or palate. Performing an interview in English is hard enough on its own as an undergraduate student; performing an interview that has to be translated to and from any of 3 different languages, that is much harder. However, my team and I quickly were able to work out a system that helped us to ease the process, both for ourselves and the caregivers. Our research project focused on qualitative research, whereas most focus on quantitative. The ability and knowledge to both will be a great asset to me as I participate in more research projects moving forward.



"My learning abroad experience relit my fire to continue studying to prepare for my dream job. I'd been having a hard time deciding if a career in international health was something that I really want to do with my life. After returning from my program, I can't imagine preparing to do anything else."

