

## 'burg Blogs »

# I Had No Idea What I Was Doing In College

Posted January 28, 2013 at 4:41 pm by [Alicia Gangi '14](#)

While applying at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg and colleges in general, I thought a lot about that saying, “college isn’t for everyone.” People say things like you have to go to college and college will be the best four years of your life. No one says anything about what I could do if it turns out college wasn’t for me.

When I started school at USFSP I had the option of living on campus in a dorm room. Recruiters and orientation speakers told me dorms are where you’ll make life long friends, that’s where you can create memories, and living on campus is part of the college experience. Still, I had no interest in living on campus and being that close to students that like dubstep and ping pong tournaments.

After I ditched the dorm idea, I went through my first few weeks of classes constantly being asked to join some club or given a flyer to come to some event.

Sailing Club? No.

Movie night on campus? Nope.

Student Government? Nah.

Multicultural Affairs? No, thanks.

If this is what college is, I’m definitely not a “college person.” But, really what was I going to do? I couldn’t just quit school. After a year or so I realized I had to stop hating everything and let college work for me.

That saying, “college isn’t for everyone” should really be “college is different for everyone.” Thanks to USF St. Petersburg’s and Tampa’s study abroad programs I became a “college person.” In the last year, I’ve participated in two study abroad programs. The first was in [Salamanca, Spain](#) and the second was in Oxford, England. The programs helped me find my place at USFSP. I returned each time with a new found appreciation for my campus. During my first two years at USFSP I took for granted its convenient location, small classroom sizes, and its accessibility. These are features not all schools around the world have. I am now a member of the [TRIO Student Support Services Program](#). There, I help other students learn more not just about study abroad, but [how to pay for it too](#).

*Spanish dancers performing during a USFSP guided tour. Photo by: Dana Parkinson.*



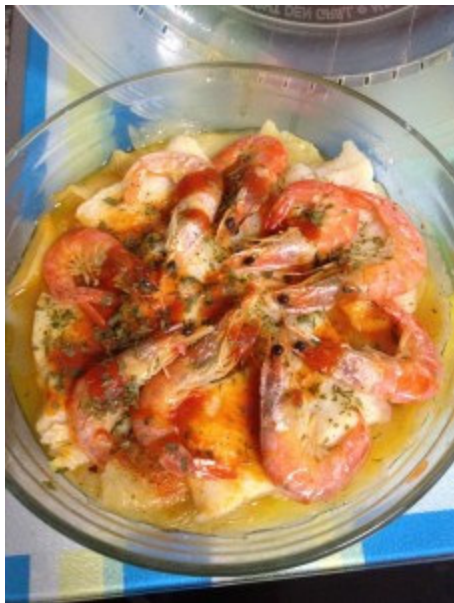
I recently finished my minor in Spanish and Latino studies at USFSP. I've been taking Spanish language courses for eight years and even have Rosetta Stone... Surprisingly, I still wasn't fluent in Spanish. Last Summer I spent a month in Salamanca, Spain as part of USFSP's study abroad program. I received three credit hours, finished my minor, and was even having dreams in Spanish. I never would have accomplished this or became a fluent Spanish speaker if I didn't find this program at USFSP.

[Study abroad](#) is a wonderful experience USF offers because it essentially takes the "college" out of studying. In Salamanca, I lived with a crazy single Spanish woman. She fed me, washed my clothes, commented on how late I stayed out at night, and forced me to take naps after lunch. She was like a mom. She only spoke Spanish, I went to an intensive Spanish language university, and met locals that only spoke Spanish. It's safe to say, the only language I could speak for a month was Spanish. If you have absolutely any interest in learning another language, do a study abroad program in a country where you are forced to speak it. School was still school, but the nightlife and my free time drastically altered my speaking efficiency. Studying Spanish was embedded into my everyday life in a much more fun and relaxed way than just taking a few Spanish courses. My roommate, also from USFSP, and I went out almost every night. This experience was the only time in my life where I felt like going out wasn't a method of procrastination. It was a genuine opportunity to take what I have learned in school for years and finally use it in real life.



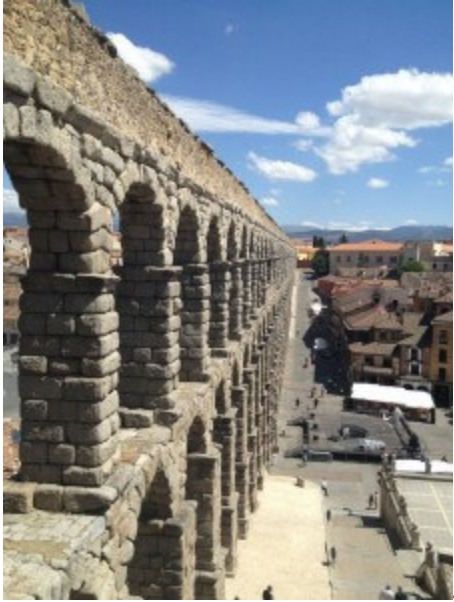
*Locals celebrating in Plaza Mayor when Spain won the Euro 2012.*

USFSP also provided us with guided tours through other cities in Spain and put together cultural events like watching traditional flamenco dancing. I was in Spain when it won the UEFA Euro 2012 and I've eaten almost every traditional meal the country has to offer. I didn't just get to learn the language, I was a part of Spanish culture too.



*A common fish and potato dinner my host mother made me. Photo by Alicia Gangi.*

[USFSP's study abroad](#) made it easy and affordable to have this one of a kind experience. I loved the experience so much I did study abroad again for three months the following semester. Although you won't find me cooking in a dorm room or tailgating before a USF football game, I did figure out what I was doing in college. Still, maybe college isn't for everyone, but USFSP definitely worked for me.



*Roman Aqueduct, Segovia, Spain*

### About the blogger



I'm a senior at USFSP, but I won't be graduating for another year. That is because I'm majoring in both Mass Communications and Political Science. I love to travel. I spend my summers and winters backpacking through different countries.