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End of Program report
IAU College Spring 2015

I may start by saying that I am still 100% honored and shocked to have received both the Staley award and the Study Abroad Scholarship awards. I've been paying for school all along the way, and to be able to go abroad with not only the emotional, but the financial support of my professors at WCU brought me greater peace of mind than I can express. My experience in Aix-en-Provence, France was nothing less than astounding. I will admit that I look back and think I missed out on a lot, but even if that's true it's all because I learned an incredible amount about myself at my own pace.

IAU's French Honors Program frustrated me to no end throughout the semester, but the many revelations that came at the end of the course were completely worth every closed minded judgement I had made prior to finding my niche in our coursework. It was not until the end of the semester that I paused and asked myself, what does it mean to me to be here? In that moment, sitting on ledge of the Cathédrale Saint-Sauveur, nestled between the golden yellow buildings and the endless blue skies, I realized that the past semester had meant so much more than I allowed every day to be.

So let's take a step back: My host mother, Frédérique, made the most wonderful meals and she'd always give me a euro to go pick up the daily bread so we'd get to eat just a little bit earlier; We'd often debate social issues and I'd help translate between the other americans. The Saturday morning markets were an oxymoron of tranquil chaos that can only be attributed to the beyond perfect weather and the mixture of overzealous shoppers and tourist groups shoving through la Place Richelme. The most delectable crêpes were at Edouard et Maelle next la boulangerie Paul with the crunchy house nutella. They are not to be missed. One time, I got lost

on a walk and found Cézanne's workshop. The Science-Po often presents conferences where present and former world leaders come to speak. The depth of artwork that the student from the Marschutz school presented at their show case was not only astounding, but it had me inspired to try it myself. We americans made singing in the streets a thing to be celebrated. Little moments like these made living in Aix feel so authentic and meaningful.

The staff at IAU were there to harvest every moment of growth we could have as people and as students. My theater professor's advice was to never have fear of making mistake, which was just about the best lesson I learned while in Aix. The idea was that this new world we were being thrown into wasn't so scary, or judgmental, or unfamiliar as we thought. We were welcome there, and after a while the city felt like ours. Stemming from this lesson, I learned that asking questions isn't a sign of stupidity and that curiosity is a gift; I learned that opportunities will come and go, so I might as well take them now; I learned that my stubbornness has a time and place; I learned that creativity can come in all shapes and sizes and that most of them are beautifully weird; I learned great moments don't happen the same way twice; and I learned traveling with absolutely no one but yourself is a funny combination of loneliness and pure bliss.

I am slowing starting to feel the repercussions of study abroad, and I have no doubt that this investment will play a large part in shaping my future.