



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: A Spanish Student Again **Name:** Melissa Finfrock
Other Team Members:
Program: Oklahoma Program
Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001 **Location Visited:** Spain
Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 02

Project Summary: Spain has been an important part of my educational experience as well as my personal life. After returning home from a six-month study abroad during my college career, I knew Spanish had to be a part of my life for the rest of my life. I also deeply desired to return to Spain to continue to study. This summer I was afforded the opportunity of make my dreams a reality. I departed in late June for three weeks of endless adventure, learning, and cultural immersion. My purpose for this trip was to study Spanish language and literature at the University of Salamanca, the oldest university in Spain and a noted place to study Spanish. Having just begun to teach Advanced Placement Spanish Literature last year my goals for the fellowship were to improve my teaching methods, deepen my comprehension and analysis of Spanish literature, and speak more confidently in Spanish. My time in the variety of courses I took this summer allowed me to observe different techniques in education as well as gain a greater appreciation of the beauty of the language and literature. What I didn't expect was how much my education extended beyond the classroom and has already influenced my teaching. I was able to travel to many different cities and visit important historical and cultural sites. These side trips not only expanded my understanding of the Spanish culture and how that has affected writers throughout time, but they also required me to communicate daily with the Spanish people. I gained greater confidence in my speaking abilities and enjoyed these unexpected cultural encounters.

Career Impact: This fellowship not only challenged me to step out of my comfort zone, but it also helped me grow as a person and educator. I have always been shy to speak Spanish with native speakers because I am constantly aware of my shortcomings in my expression. However, during my two weeks of classes I was required to speak Spanish daily with my professors and fellow classmates. This forced me to overlook my mistakes and speak on a regular basis. I was also fortunate to have motivated, dynamic, and enthusiastic professors. Their passion and excitement was contagious. Their energy and personalities have influenced my teaching. I am enjoying this new found confidence and passion for my career.

Classroom/Community Impact: Upon embarking on this fellowship I was unaware of how much my passion for the Spanish language, literature, and culture would develop and grow. This has directly affected my classroom this year in ways I could have never imagined. From the experience of being in Madrid when Spain won the Europe cup in soccer to becoming a student again, I have been able to connect in a variety ways to all types of students and I have seen greater interest and involvement from them. I am speaking Spanish regularly in the classroom and requiring the students to decipher the Spanish they don't yet know through context and nonverbal cues. I can honestly say this has been the first year I have been genuinely excited to return to the classroom after summer break. I am happy to report my passion for my work after the first month has not diminished either. I truly believe my enthusiasm and enjoyment directly affects my students and can be credited for their eagerness to learn.

Open Response: Two other teachers at my school site were awarded fellowships to study their discipline. We have already presented a seminar on Fund for Teachers during one of our professional development days. Sharing my experience and hearing their experiences reaffirms how beneficial this program is for teachers and what a rich blessing it is to teachers, students, parents, and the community at large. I am continually encouraging my fellow language teachers to apply. Furthermore, due to my great interest and enjoyment of the Spanish culture I am in the progress of adjusting my lesson plans to incorporate a cultural exploration project. I am confident this pause in traditional Spanish language learning will enrich and enliven the students' perspective of Spanish.

Quote: By becoming a student again I learned new and innovative ways to convey the important aspects of literary works while hopefully instilling in my students the desire to continue their Spanish studies beyond high school.

Photos:



Spanish Language Class



Lazarillo de Tormes Statue



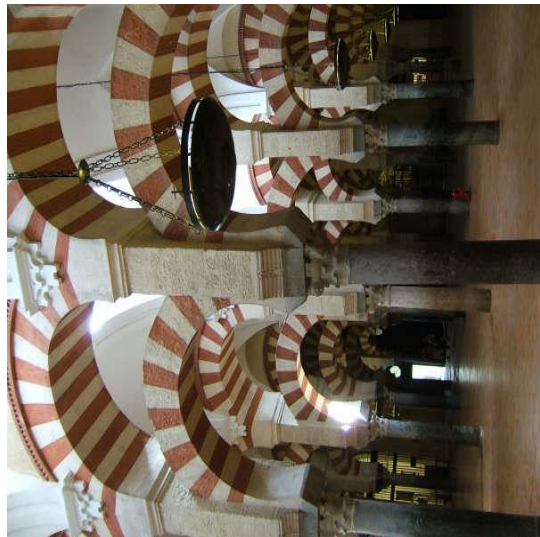
Miguel de Unamuno and me



University of Salamanca Language Building



Salamanca's Plaza Mayor



Cordoba's Mezquita



Granada's Alhambra



Roman Aqueducts of Segovia