SOUTH AFRICA & ZAMBIA

One of the reasons that I came to Davidson was the strong pre-med program. When I first arrived, I did not think that I would be able to study abroad because I had heard that it was challenging to go abroad as a science major. However, I am now a senior, and I have been abroad for two summers.

My first summer study abroad was in Zambia with the Davidson in Zambia program. I got class credit with a letter grade because a Davidson professor led it and taught the adjoining seminar. I also got first-hand medical experience in Mwandi as I shadowed doctors, volunteered in the clinics, and checked-in patients. Another really unique aspect to this opportunity was the independent research project each student undertakes while in Zambia. It helped me to gain experience in field research, as well as develop closer relationships in the community.

This past summer, I studied at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. One of the challenges when choosing a non-Davidson program is that I am still not sure if I will receive credit for my coursework.* However, the experience was worth it. I was also able to get a Dean Rusk grant to cover the cost of most of the two programs I chose.

The reason I chose to attend Winter School at Stellenbosch was because they did offer medical and biology-related classes. Every student takes a political history course, and then I chose to take a class on biodiversity with a focus on medicinal plants and another on HIV and AIDS. The combination of these two classes with my summer in Zambia helped me to think about what kind of doctor I want to be and where I want to specialize. They were also unique courses that I would not have had the chance to take at Davidson, but yet they still fell within the realm of my major and pre-medical studies. They were also experience-based learning. For my biodiversity class, I hiked a mountain with a bush doctor as he pointed out and taught us about different medicinal plants and their uses. As part of my HIV class, we went to the Desmond Tutu HIV Centre and met with workers there. To me, the cultural excursions for each class were the highlights.

I think that every pre-med student should take the opportunity to go abroad at some point, whether it is for a semester or a summer. It broadens your perspective and gives you the chance to take classes not offered at Davidson. Plus, it gives you something to expand upon in your medical school essays and interviews and adds something to your profile that helps you to stand out. My advice would be to look for programs that allow you to either go into a medical setting like in Zambia or that have experiential learning like my classes in South Africa. Whatever you choose, make sure it is something that interests you and helps to push you out of your comfort zone.

**Students studying on non-Davidson programs now complete a Transfer Credit Form to obtain pre-authorization for a course taken abroad. Final approval is granted once the student returns and work from the course is reviewed.*