Fall 2009 Student Testimonials

Lauren Meador ‘10
Development Sociology, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
“Although it would be easy to give a stock, obvious answer about what I gained most from Urban Semester—ethnographic research experience, hands-on medical knowledge—the most important things I gained are of a more abstract nature. I learned the kinds of vocational positions I feel comfortable in, and what kind of job environment is important to me. I learned that I love living in cities, and that although I can achieve success in a constant, routine environment, I thrive when a position requires quick, adaptable thinking skills. Urban Semester gave me great short-term job experiences, but most importantly, shaped the way I look at my future life decisions.”

Rachel Soffer ‘10
Human Development, College of Human Ecology
“I could write a book about all that I have seen, done, and learned during this semester. I had an opportunity to explore, firsthand, the field in which I am interested. I had weekly rotations with an anesthesiologist and a pediatrician, and I participated in research at the HIV Clinical Trials Unit at Weill Cornell. I also volunteered in the third grade class of a Brooklyn charter school. The perfect location in New York City, the opportunity to meet other Cornell students, and the ability to learn about the diverse lives of New Yorkers made the Urban Semester Program extremely unique.”

Matthew Haber ‘11
Biological Sciences, Neurobiology and Behavior, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
“Through the Urban Semester Program I have gained a profoundly greater insight into what it means to be a medical physician. Not only do I have a great deal of clinical experience now, but I also have also lived the lifestyle of a doctor due to the many hours that I spent in the hospital per week—something which only the Urban Semester Program could have allowed me to do. Combined with the service experience in North Brooklyn, the Urban Semester Program is truly unparalleled.”

Maria Teresa Asare-Boadi ‘11
Design & Environmental Analysis, College of Human Ecology
“The Urban Semester Program has given me the opportunity to fully experience and immerse myself in a corporate design environment, which is exactly what I was looking for. Over the course of the semester, I have had the chance to reflect on the experiences I was having and I
have realized that design is truly the path I want to follow after graduation. Having been able to intern at MTV, I have made great contacts and have acquired a great set of skills which will help me when I am applying for jobs. I have seen the bigger picture, and I liked what I saw. As I go back to Cornell, I actually know what it is that I'm working so hard for.”

Rebecca Gyi ‘10  
Human Biology, Health, and Society, College of Human Ecology  
“Urban Semester exposed me not only to several different career paths but also to a life of service and an understanding of what service truly means. In addition to interacting with professionals to see which field fit me best, I had the opportunity to meet people of the community to learn about and be actively involved in their cultures, struggles, and ambitions. Through this program, I have gained a better understanding of the disparities that plague certain communities and a motivation to help eliminate them.”

Eric Brooks ‘10  
Human Biology, Health, and Society, College of Human Ecology  
“Rarely are students able to both learn from and serve those who teach them in the university setting. However, the Urban Semester Program allows this mutually beneficial and unique exchange of knowledge, personal insight, and empowerment to transpire by requiring students to immerse themselves in the communities and internships that they take on, becoming participant observers. Thus, students not only leave the semester with a much clearer sense of the type of career they would like but also with an awareness that they helped disadvantaged communities that are similarly trying to improve and attain success. Lastly, the USP is paramount to the essential nature of our institution: Indeed, the USP upholds Cornell’s dogma because the form of study that is experiential learning is both momentous and necessary for the idea of ‘any person, any study.’”

Cheryline Pezzullo ‘11  
Biology and Society, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences  
“The Urban Semester Program was by far the best decision I’ve made at Cornell. I truly became more independent and gained skills that I will use for the rest of my life. I now understand the true value of networking, as well as how important it is to allow oneself to be open to meeting people from all backgrounds, regardless of socio-economic status. Urban Semester allowed me to hone in on what my own personal skills are and develop them in a practical setting at New York Presbyterian Hospital, with encouragement from real doctors and residents. I truly feel blessed to be given the opportunity to be a part of such a program and can only hope more students become more aware of its existence because the results are truly life altering.”

Yvette Penner ‘11  
Nutritional Science, Dietetics, College of Human Ecology  
“Being a part of Urban Semester helped me develop confidence both as a person and as an aspiring professional. I look back on everything I did during my internships, and I know I will not be as nervous walking into an interview. My experiences in New York left me with no doubt that I am capable of networking and fitting into the ‘real world.’”
Julie Katske ‘11  
Human Development, College of Human Ecology  
“Urban Semester is an amazing experience. I’m writing this blurb in a café in Alphabet City. It’s December and it’s above freezing. After this I’m going to Chinatown for Christmas shopping, and tomorrow I’m going to the Met because I’ve got some free time. Being in New York is unlike anything else, and having the opportunity to live there and work there and play there...grab it, there’s no reason not to.

“Sam Beck is incredible. He’s the kind of teacher who you’ll joke with and laugh with and learn from, and maybe see a Broadway play with, and he’ll show you that there is so much more to NYC than just Manhattan. [Internship coordinator] Teresa Gowan, too, will be your best friend, your confidante, your coffee-talk buddy, and your tour guide.

“USP is one of those things that I’ve done at Cornell that I want to force everyone I know to do too—that’s how much I loved it. I can’t imagine how you could regret doing it, but, trust me, you’d definitely regret not doing it.”

Mansha Sethi ‘11  
Human Biology, Health and Society, College of Human Ecology  
“I experienced a tremendous amount of personal growth through Urban Semester and the opportunity it provided me to self-reflect. Whether it was doing rotations with the doctors, working in the classroom with kindergarteners, or discussing health disparities during seminars, I always got continuous feedback from others, which doesn’t usually happen at a big university like Cornell, where the majority of my classes have 500 or more students. Living in New York City evokes a sense of independence, an indescribable feeling that cannot be felt in Ithaca.”

Lida Zheng ‘11  
Human Biology, Health, and Society, College of Human Ecology  
"I’ve always wanted to live in the city, and Urban Semester was the perfect opportunity to not only explore and feel a part of NYC’s diverse environment, but also gain a new level of exposure to the health field. As expected, I loved the city, but I also grew in areas I did not expect. I feel more confident in entering the medical profession, more proud of my cultural background, and more appreciative of the opportunities in my life!"

Jing Selina Li ‘11  
Human Biology, Health, and Society, College of Human Ecology  
“Urban Semester has been a tremendously rewarding learning experience for me. I chose the pre-med rotations experience and had the opportunity to work with top-notch medical professionals in clinic, emergency, and operating room settings. The program gave me the opportunity to learn from real-life experience and develop skills I would not have gained in an academic setting. I was also able to gain personal growth through becoming more culturally aware and ethically sensitive. I would highly recommend this program to all students.”