Lindsey Echtermeyer – UF in Vietnam

**Major:** Economics | **Minor:** Business Administration

I studied abroad...
for the experiences and for the chance to learn something new. In the modern world, understanding and acceptance of different people and cultures is so vital, and it is this principle of understanding that drove my desire to study and work abroad.

One of my biggest challenges before studying abroad was...
my concern on the language barrier. I was worried that my lack of Vietnamese would prevent me from interacting with people from my host country, but I learned that even with the language barrier I could still find ways to make meaningful connections.

A typical meal I had while studying abroad:
Most of our meals came from street vendors, which can be found on any street corner. These meals turned out to be some of the best dishes I ever had. One snack that we ate a lot is called *Banh Mi*, which is a French-Vietnamese fusion. Vietnamese food is a blend of many different cultures, which made trying new food very intriguing.

My favorite spot in my host city:
I don’t think there was one specific spot that I enjoyed, but I always enjoyed walking through the many parks the city had. These parks gave a glimpse into the daily life of the Vietnamese people. There was always something going on in the park, whether it was a soccer game, a workout class, a dance class, or just people sitting around having a good time.

One cool event I got to experience while abroad:
One event that I particularly enjoyed was a networking event I attended. The event was hosted through the American Chamber of Commerce. At the event, I was able to network with high up individuals in all kind of companies and make connections with people I would have probably never gotten the chance to meet. It reinforced the idea that networking is everything and allowed me to meet new people from around the world.

The strangest/most memorable experience for me while abroad was...
was when my co-workers took me out to lunch. They took me to a local Vietnamese restaurant. The restaurant specialty was called *Balut*, which is a duck embryo that is almost fully formed. It is a Vietnamese specialty. I decided to give it a try, and it had one of the most interesting tastes I have ever experienced. I don’t think I will be having it again any time soon, but it was exciting to try something so different.

A habit I picked up while abroad was...
family-style dinners. We would go to restaurants and order lots of different things for the table, and everyone would share. It is a habit I hope to continue here in the U.S.

What I found most challenging while abroad was...
the language barrier. It was frustrating at times to not be able to correctly communicate with someone, but through Google Translate and the help of others, we would always find a solution.

What surprised me most about study abroad:
I had heard from many people about the friendless of the people in our host country, but I was not prepared for how friendly Vietnamese people actually were. They were always willing to help us and made us feel so welcome into their home.

My last bit of advice:
My advice would be don't let the cost or distance discourage you from this opportunity. There are resources to help you financially and help you prepare for your actual time abroad.