I felt a tap on my shoulder: “They need you to translate,” my supervisor said. On a chaotic day at *Abrazos*, where I currently teach ESL in Charleston, S.C., medical professionals volunteered their time to give a health and safety lesson to the class of Latina women. The translator had stepped out and I welcomed the opportunity to use my Spanish language skills to connect my class with the doctor. I translated as he advised the students on various topics, such as how to extinguish a fire, childproof a house, and maintain low blood sugar. I later learned that my students had never received this kind of information before, and were thankful to have access to such a vital community resource. I never imagined that I would be in this position, bringing together groups within the greater Charleston community, but I thrive on such intercultural connections, having had similar opportunities both at home and abroad.

I came to know the immigrant community of my home city of Boston while interning at the community-run non-profit, *Centro Presente*, which provides education, legal counsel, and advocacy for Latinos. There, I taught English and worked in the office answering calls from clients in Spanish. In both capacities, I learned from their stories of falling asleep during overnight shifts at a second job, and worries about unwarranted police searches. It was a glance into living and working as a Latino immigrant within the state I call home.

My first experience with community programs in a developing country took place during my first year at the College of Charleston, when I spent a week in Tegucigalpa, Honduras as part of an honors research course. I worked through the Lamb Institute (LAMB), a non-profit which promotes sustainable development among youth in the city. I was impressed by the mature appreciation the students had for education as I interviewed Miguel, a scholarship recipient at a local trade school. He spoke of his generous plans to give back to LAMB by sharing his newly acquired computer skills with other students who could not afford to attend the trade school.

Volunteering in a city marked with severe poverty, working with community groups like LAMB, and meeting leaders like Miguel inspired me to direct my coursework toward community-based development. In addition to my declared major in Spanish, I decided to add a minor in economics to better understand the multifaceted issue of poverty I saw first-hand in Honduras. My later travels to other Spanish-speaking communities, including Cuba and Argentina, further encouraged me to study economic issues in Latin America. Serving as a delegate to Mexico in the Model Organization for American States (MOAS), I investigated key economic concerns within Latin America in a specifically Mexican context. During this summit, I joined students from all over the Americas to craft policy suggestions relating to poverty reduction. Navigating the specific interests of Mexico during policy debates gave me a newfound understanding of its unique position internationally. My senior thesis, “Comparative Inequality” incorporates much of this research through an analysis of social programs, such as Mexico’s *Oportunidades*, and compares the sustainability of these mitigation programs within Latin America to the structural factors that have provided countries like Norway with relative equality.

Exploring Mexican politics and culture through my research engagements and work with Mexican immigrants has driven me to pursue a further understanding of Mexico from within. I plan to immerse myself in my host community in Mexico, both as educator and active community participant. I believe the Fulbright ETA to Mexico is as a crucial step to deepen my undergraduate experiences and prepare me for graduate studies, ultimately enabling my future goal of serving underrepresented Latino communities in the United States.