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Reflection Paper

I participated in the Greece Summer Study Program with Professor Fotopoulos from May 25, 2006 to June 7, 2006. Sixteen Saint Mary's women took part in the intercultural learning experience.

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." (Confucius) By participating in the Greece Summer Study Program, I have come to realize that history is more than a story. As a student in the United States, I have read countless historical texts about the history of places around the world that have meant little to me. Reading about distant places never interested me much. Sure looking at pictures of the ancient architecture and civilization gave some life to the dull text that lay in front of us, but it was far from intriguing.

In May 2006, I became intrigued with the ancient world for the first time in my life. Once we arrived we could see the Parthenon from the streets of Athens. To actually see one of the marvels that I had read about in some history class was beyond anything I had ever imagined.

For the first full day in Greece the plan was to take the train and walk up to the Acropolis. As we were walking up there I kept thinking, "This is a long, difficult walk and I'm wearing comfortable shoes, how did ancient Greeks walk this?" From the streets of Athens, the Parthenon looked beautiful. Sitting up on top of this huge hill all lit up, it didn't look that big. Then when we reached the top and were standing in front of it, I was speechless. Of course living in a big city my whole life, I've seen a lot of big

architecture, but nothing like this. I was baffled. How could an ancient culture ever build something so big without the modern technology we have today to build?

As we walked around the Acropolis, we could see ancient architectural remains everywhere. My favorite was what is left of the Temple of Zeus. Only 15 of the 104 original Corinthian columns still stand today and there is one that seemed to have fallen perfectly. Seeing it from far away was amazing and I wished that we would get to see it up close, but unfortunately that wasn't part of our itinerary.

The next day, however, a few of us were out shopping and walking around Athens, when what seemed like out of nowhere, there stood the Temple that I had wished I was going to get to see. It was an indescribable feeling to stumble upon something so incredible.

After finding the Temple of Zeus by accident, I understood that there could be ancient architecture anywhere and so I should keep my eyes open constantly. Discovering the Temple of Zeus early in the trip made me want to be aware of my surroundings at all times because I didn't want to miss anything.

My trip to Greece was incredible. It helped me understand how important history truly is and that it is more than just what is in a history book. I've come to appreciate other cultures more because of my experience in Greece and have increased my desire to travel to the places I've only read about.