



Princeton in Latin America January Newsletter

**Update from the field: Nathan Fabian
Arias Foundation, San Jose, Costa Rica**

The Princeton in Latin America fellowship has turned out to be an amazing next step for me. Even though I have only been here for four and a half months, I've already had opportunity to work with governmental officials, travel, and even start my own project! It has given me the chance not only to get experience in a foundation, but has also taught me the importance of taking your own initiative, creating opportunities and involving yourself in things that interest you.

Just to rattle off some of the interesting things I've gotten involved in here over the past months: I spent 3 days working at the first Alliance of Civilizations Conference in Latin America. The Alliance is a UN peace initiative that encourages using dialogue to increase cultural understanding around the world. At the conference I sat in on panel discussions, met international leaders including the president of Costa Rica, Dr. Arias himself, and even was able to attend a follow-up luncheon at the Spanish Ambassador to Costa Rica's personal residence. For the conference, I was given the responsibility of writing the opening speech and a declaration statement that was signed by a dozen Nobel Laureates. When assigned these tasks, I was concerned they were too important to be given to recent college graduate, but was told that they trust PiLA interns, so I took it on. I can't put into words how wonderful it felt to hear the words I wrote being spoken in front of the president!



Nathan, a colleague, and Dr. Arias at the Alliance of Civilizations Conference

I have also been on the road a lot. One of the non-work reasons I came to Costa Rica is to travel throughout the region, and I have been able to do so. With the Lonely Planet guide at my side, the other Arias interns and I have planned trips to different beaches, volcanoes or forests, almost every weekend. In fact, I have spent well over half of my weekends here traveling all around Costa Rica and even as far away as Guatemala. We have had some great adventures and there are plenty more to come.

I think it is important to point out that for me, the PiLA experience has manifested itself in three very distinct, beneficial areas, that have not only been enjoyable, but

have served as a crash course in surviving life after college. Those areas are independence, work and pleasure. Let me explain.

First of all, I do not think that I could possibly be any more independent than I am right now. Living alone in another country, thousands of miles away from the support of any friends or family, is not easy. It is quickly teaching me to be self-sufficient and self-motivating, which I have found to be a strengthening experience that can only make life easier once I return to the states.

I have been integrated very quickly into a well established Foundation that works with high officials and is well connected around the world. This has forced me quickly learn how to work with high expectations, to speedily improve my Spanish, to work alongside other motivated professionals, and most importantly, how to make myself stand out and be a reliable member of the team.

Finally, I have learned the importance of filling life with pleasure in order to remain as excited and passionate as I was the day I received my diploma. For me that pleasure is traveling and running. And it is even better in that these are two ways for me to get out into the communities that I studied to serve and be reminded what I am working toward. I take my traveling and running experiences back to my cubicle and they carry me happily through the day as I brainstorm, and create new ways to help.

Most graduates will eventually realize these three things wherever they go after college, but in the PiLA program, I believe that they are learned much more quickly due to the circumstances of living and working abroad within another culture.

It seems funny looking back at how much I have written, considering how short my stay thus far has been, but I think that just reaffirms how truly beneficial this program is. If I have learned all this four months, who knows what the rest of the year may hold!



Nathan (bottom row, far right) and the Arias team at a conference in Antigua, Guatemala.

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of PiLA:

As you know, last month, we received 110 applications for the program. After much consideration, we had to narrow this pool down to 65 for a four-day, very intense, interview session. It was not easy to make this first round of cuts, as this was a very talented group! The next round was even more tough, as there were so many qualified candidates. Of course, we cannot place 65 people in one year, so the Fellowship Committee thought long and hard and we have culled that group into 35 outstanding Finalists who will be placed into 15-20 positions over the next two months.

Below is a list of our committed and generous supporters for 2008-09. Many thanks to all our Friends for enabling this wonderful young program to continue to thrive.

We all thank you for your continued support and interest in PiLA.

All best,

Claire Brown '94
Executive Director

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