

Collaborative Project Reports

Fulbright-Hays Summer 2009 Intensive Yoruba Group Project Abroad [GPA]

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This year marks the fifth successful hosting of the Summer Intensive Yorùbá Group Project Abroad [GPA] Program, which is funded by the US Department of Education through its Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program.

This eight-week summer intensive language program is based at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife in Nigeria, and provides an avenue for American college students to achieve advanced competence in the study of Yorùbá language and culture. The instruction therefore gave equal attention to proficiency in the four basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and understanding. Other components of the program are one-on-one tutoring, interaction with local residents, discussions with Yorùbá scholars, interaction with guest lecturers, reading a variety of literary works in Yorùbá, and field trips to cultural and historical sites.

The program, which took place from June 18 to August 16, 2009, had 11 participants including 5 graduate students and 6 undergraduate students from seven universities across the United States. The institutions represented were: University of Florida, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Texas-Austin, Harvard University, California State University-Fresno, University of Georgia, and Georgia Southern University.

Participants were able to develop their Yoruba language competence through classroom instruction as well as informal interaction and socialization outside of class. There were numerous things achieved in the 2009 program in terms of the participants' immersion experience, language instruction, and program administration. The program participants were able to use the Yorùbá language to perform various personal and professional activities in Ile Ife and other parts of Yorùbá land. Even though some participants became integrated with their host families and the host university community quicker than others, all participants were able to use the Yorùbá language to perform far ranging tasks as well as learn



more about the language, people, and culture.

Although there were some challenges as one might find in any study abroad program, the good news is that we continue to see the long-term benefits of the program. For instance, 2 former participants of the program, Matthew Brown (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Regan Buck Barden (UCLA) have been awarded Fulbright scholarships for doctoral dissertation fieldwork in Nigeria next year. While Matt will be working on the Nigerian video film industry, Regan's research interest centers on the early print industry in Yorùbá land and the interactions between print and oral practices.

Finally, we continue to refine the program to achieve the goals of advanced language competency and encourage the study of Yorùbá language and culture.

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