

2017

## Find Yourself By Looking In A New Place

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### Recommended Citation

Leeds, Christopher (2017) "Find Yourself By Looking In A New Place," *The Tuxedo Archives*: Vol. 2006 , Article 6.

Available at: <http://scholar.dominican.edu/tuxedolit/vol2006/iss2/6>

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# FIND YOURSELF BY LOOKING IN A NEW PLACE

CHRISTOPHER LEEDS, PH.D. MBA



Making the choice to leave a very successful, established life in the corporate world and enter academia was an easy one for me. The opportunity to help students find some direction, to find a path to start their lives or change already established ones, was irresistible. After all, if someone as impulsive and filled with Wanderlust as myself could find some direction, well I figured that just about anyone could. Of course this would only happen if they knew where to look.

So, where does a student look to find any answers? Well, my experience tells me that you don't look close to home. You watch for the right signs from above and you travel. It's as simple, and difficult, as that.

Growing up in Detroit (a popular travel destination as we all know), I always dreamed of seeing the world. Well, it took me until the age of 35 to finally take my first trip abroad. My reaction? "You putz! Why did you wait this long? You have a lot of catching up to do!" So catching up is what I have done. I've now lived in four countries, visited 31, and have flown in and out of 105 airports (yes, I have even kept track of this!) And why have I placed such an emphasis on moving about the globe? Again, because for me, the answers are scattered out there, and finding them is like a scavenger hunt – you have to find the clues and slowly piece the puzzle together.

While having the pleasure to lead student study abroad trips or arranging for student's study in foreign lands, I have found that while most students are all looking for different things, they often find pieces of the puzzle when they leave the comfort of their smaller world here in the Bay Area. For many of these students, it has been their first trip abroad and to see their reaction to the different cultural settings, to observe as they see places they have only read about, has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my teaching. Plus, it has continued to provide me with additional pieces to the puzzle of my life.

In the last four years I have had the privilege of taking student groups to England, Ireland, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, and Switzerland. We have trips planned to Spain, Portugal and Ecuador. I have also been able to arrange for four students to spend a semester at the Ecole Superieure de Commerce Et de

Management (the ESCEM is one of the finest French business schools) in Tours/Poitiers, France. This means that in total, we have had approximately 130 Dominican students go in search of pieces of the puzzle, I bet they would all agree that they found at least one piece.

Should you study abroad? After all it is an extra expense and a college education is not cheap! Well, the answer is a resounding and easy, YES! I cannot emphasize the importance of travel enough. Go in search of your dream, and while the dream may end up in California, I'm betting you'll find that it starts in some exotic spot many, many miles away.