

Victoria International Leadership Program Participant Write-up



Stacia Meczywor – Fall 2010 participant

I found the Victoria International Leadership Program to be a really good program to get involved with. As a study abroad student, I did a modified version of the program that required me to attend two seminars, two speaker events, and gain 20 experiential points.

For the seminars, at least one had to have a New Zealand focus, which I really liked because it exposed me to New Zealand's place in the world in regards to international relations, which is a perspective that, as a psychology major, I don't think I would have been exposed to otherwise. However, the seminars do fill up quickly, so if a student is studying there for only one trimester like I was, they really need to be aware of when seminars are and sign up early.

As far as the speaker events go, this was probably my favorite part of the program. They have several speaker events every week on a wide range of topics, so there really is something for everyone. I even ended up attending a few extra speaker events just because the topics were so interesting.

Finally, I think the experiential points were the most challenging aspect of the program, particularly if you're only there for a trimester. I got my experiential points by taking a class on Maori society and culture, which I would highly recommend to anyone who has the flexibility to do that with their schedule. However, you can also gain points by volunteering in the community. I actually wanted to do some volunteer work in the community in addition to my Maori class, so I can offer some insight on this aspect of the program as well. First of all, VILP doesn't actually have a program for setting people up with volunteer opportunities so you have to go through Volunteer Wellington. When working with Volunteer Wellington, you have to first go in and meet with them, then you'll get the contact information for the place you want to volunteer, then you typically have to meet with that organization. Therefore, this can be a time consuming process. By the time I went through VILP, Volunteer Wellington, and got through to the refugee tutoring center where I wanted to volunteer, it was too late in the semester to make a worthwhile commitment. While there may have been more short term requirements that I could have done later in the trimester had I needed the volunteer experience, I really think the most important part of completing the experiential points is to start early.

Overall I think the Victoria International Leadership Program was a worthwhile program. The amount of work required for the program is very reasonable, but it is important to plan ahead. It exposed me to different perspectives that I don't think I would have gotten otherwise, and I would definitely recommend it to other people studying abroad.