

Michael Blazanin, Diversity Statement

Throughout my academic career, I have seen a second language as a tool to open new doors and make new opportunities available. Accordingly, I have studied and pursued the Spanish language for the past eight years of my life. One of the most influential experiences I have had was spending a semester in Venezuela, where I took language immersion courses in field botany, tropical ecology and sustainable agriculture, while living in a homestay. Following that experience abroad, I have also pursued frequent international travel, spending several weeks in Costa Rica and India this past year. All three of these trips have exposed me to a diverse array of people, cultures and experiences. Furthermore, while abroad in Venezuela I had the opportunity to participate in and lead a biological research project. Through this project I was exposed to new scientific cultures and environments. Working on that investigation taught me how to adapt my personal and scientific mindset for different cultures, while also teaching me new knowledge and technical skills. Our society is becoming increasingly diverse, necessitating a flexible way of thinking that can adapt to an array of contexts. The adaptability I have learned abroad and continue to develop helps prepare me to lead regardless of the role. Finally, I intend to continue to engage with my Spanish-language skills throughout my career, using them to explore new areas and foster personal and professional relationships, and providing opportunities to connect with researchers in the rapidly-growing scientific institutions of Latin America.