

## **Nichole Rohlfen, Interim Follow-up Essay, 1**

My internship with Namibia Women's Health Network turned out differently than expected, but proved to be a rewarding experience. My site supervisor had told me I would be working with her on a youth economic empowerment project where 65 disadvantaged youth were given the opportunity to take short courses (one year) at an institution of their choice. The program (funded by the Ford Foundation from the U.S.) is to help the youth find employment or become self-employed and start a business. My task for this project included calling students and asking them to come to the office to sign memorandums of understanding. Once they came into the office I explained the memorandum of understanding and what their role and their parent/guardians' responsibilities included. I also made an excel spreadsheet of all the students' updated information.

The director of the organization came after the first week and gave me other tasks to do. NWHN has several programs including a health ethics committee, several focus groups of community members discussing women's issues, and other programs geared towards educating and empowering Namibian youth. I was able to learn a lot through researching gender equality for a local radio show, writing reports on focus groups about male circumcision and forced sterilization of women, and researching and creating a brochure about a trust that enables small entrepreneurs to access loans from financial institutions.

My internship helped me learn more about issues affecting women and their families and what's being done on a local, national and international level to deal with them. Through working in a professional setting I learned what work environment I prefer and what I need to work best. I saw job positions that I was interested in doing

## **Nichole Rohlfen, Interim Follow-up Essay, 2**

myself and this gave me a better idea of possibilities after graduation. My site supervisor was working with the youth but also working with the larger educational institutions, and I found myself longing to be able to have a deeper connection with the students like she did; I also wished that I could be in charge of organizing their courses and help them through the entire process.

Throughout my interactions with those in and outside of my internship I learned more about Namibian culture and aspects I value within my own culture; what it means to me to be an American. I was challenged by some cultural differences that aggravated me and enriched by those that I longed for in my own culture. Being back a second time in Namibia gave me a deeper understanding of Namibian culture and allowed me to see things in a different lense than when I had experienced Namibia previously. I saw things I hadn't seen before and felt much more comfortable within my own skin. The short time made me reflect on my time at St. Olaf and in the U.S. and made me think about my own priorities and what it is I really want for my future.