STEP Project Summary

I propose to Study Abroad during Maymester 2015 through the program sponsored by School of Public Health entitled Public Health Perspectives: India. This four-week program will allow me to study a variety of different public health, social, and cultural issues through the viewpoint of Indian society, an opportunity that will deeply enrich my overall experience at OSU.

Personal Statement

I used to see two faces when I looked in the mirror. I tried to see past the tanned skin and dark hair, my Asian-Indian features that made me feel so out of place when I was with my American friends; I yearned to see myself in their blonde-haired, blue-eyed, and fair-skinned image. This yearning continued until the fall of 2008, when my parents decided to pull my sister and me out of school for five weeks and travel to India.

Words cannot describe how much I wanted to remain in my teenage bubble and not go, and from the moment my feet left American soil, I vowed I would do everything I could to have the worst time possible.

And I upheld this promise—until we landed. As I exited the airport in Manipal, I was so overwhelmed with the colors and the strange smells of the city, not to mention the hugs and kisses of my “long-lost” family members that I forgot about my declaration of misery. Over the course of the trip, I had the chance to experience and learn things that many never do in their lifetimes: how to shake my hips like wandering gypsies in the deserts of Rajasthan; how surprisingly balanced one can feel on the back of an elephant climbing to a mountain’s peak; how royalty must feel when residing in one of India’s grandest and most beautiful palaces; and how one person can have such a lasting impact on a city and a nation. That person is my great-grandfather who not only built the flourishing city of Manipal, but also left an enduring legacy of equality, education, and love.

Until that trip, however, I couldn’t understand that phenomenon. I had heard incredible stories about him and his accomplishments; I had seen his face on framed stamps all around our house. For years I had tried to piece together who he really was, but all I could ever see was a face. But the moment I set foot in Manipal I began to understand him through experiencing his legacy. His memorial park showcased his statue, humble in both stature and depiction. The sweet aroma of bouquets of fresh flowers encircling the statue showed me that he was still cherished by his people. As I stood there, awestruck, I remember thinking that I would like to do my small part to carry on the family tradition of touching the lives of others. Indeed, those moments were the start of my plan to become a doctor and improve the lives of others through healthcare.

I now want to follow even more closely in my grandfather’s footsteps by studying at Manipal University through the program Public Health Perspectives: India. I hope to learn over Maymester how the healthcare system works to provide services to the Indian people, and how the healthcare differs in cities compared to small rural villages.
While my great-grandfather inspires me greatly, I am also motivated by my experience in witnessing my grandfather’s corticobasilar degeneration. Watching him suffer through his illness inspired me to help make a change and help others suffering through other diseases. Professionally, this program will give me hands-on experience with healthcare through experiential learning in field sites such as public health clinics, farms, and other educational institutions. Further, through this program I will be able to draw parallels and explore how healthcare in India differs from healthcare in the United States.

It would be an honor and a blessing to study at Manipal University through Public Health Perspectives: India and actively participate in continuing my great grandfather’s legacy. As I look at the initiative and mission of Ohio State’s Public Health Perspectives program, I can see it through the eyes of my great-grandfather: as an opportunity to inspire the future leaders in healthcare to be the change they wish to see in our world.

**STEP Proposal**

A wise scholar once said, “Follow your passions; money spent on books and travel is never wasted.” I propose to act on this wisdom in my STEP experience in Public Health Perspectives: India, a study abroad program focused on public health in that country.

Sponsored by Ohio State’s Department of Public Health, Public Health Perspectives: India, is an intensive four-week program centered in Manipal, a coastal town in the southwestern part of the country. The primary objective of the program is to educate students regarding different aspects of healthcare—particularly how healthcare is practiced in India.

This program has an academic component as well as a travel component—at the culmination of the term, I will receive 3 credits in Public Health 3189.01 for Maymester 2015. Regarding the academic aspect of the course, I will have the opportunity to attend a series of lectures co-taught by faculty from both Ohio State and Manipal University. While the Maymester program is focused on healthcare and public health, lectures will span a diverse array of topics, such as background on India’s vibrant culture, heritage, and history. In addition, the course will culminate in a research project presentation. This assignment will give me the chance to expand my critical thinking and analytical skills, two attributes I will carry with me when I return to the United States. Further, through the academic focus of the program, I will have the opportunity to explore and utilize Manipal University’s many resources.

The program involves a cohort of approximately 19 other OSU students. This experience will be socially expanding in that it will help me to build new friendships with the students of my cohort and the attending professors. Through visiting health clinics and volunteering in the area, I will have the opportunity to interact with the residents of the town in a way I never have before. These experiences will be transformational for me because I will have the opportunity to see how the legacy of my great-grandfather is still impacting the people of his town.
Even though this program is in a city I am familiar with, there will be many challenges for me to face. Although I have been to India several times before, I have never traveled there without my parents. This would be a personally challenging aspect of the trip because I will have to learn to be much more dependent on myself, accountable, and aware of my personal belongings at all times—including my passport and my money! Another aspect of this program that will be personally challenging is the language barrier. The primary language of Manipal, besides English, is Konkani. Konkani is my mother tongue and was my first language. Although I can understand it fluently, I have difficulty speaking. This personal challenge will be also be intellectually stimulating because it will force me to practice speaking Konkani.

Even as I myself into my heritage, I will have the opportunity to engage in service and actively give back to my homeland. Service opportunities and experiences, such as working with the Maternal and Child Health Research Institute in Mysore, will be abundant, and I will use them to further my knowledge of healthcare practices.

While Public Health Perspectives: India will be an unforgettable, life-changing experience; it will also be highly feasible given the program’s timeline and my resources. After months of preparation—including researching, writing essays, and applying to the program—I was officially accepted on January 14, 2015. There is no pre-departure course, but we will have cohort meetings prior to departure in order to build community. The timetable of the program itself follows Maymester dates: we are projected to depart Columbus on Thursday May 7, 2015. After two days in transit, we are to be picked up by Manipal University transportation at the Mangalore airport on the morning of May 9th. The program will continue throughout the Maymester term, until June 3rd. While in India, we will take field trips to delve into public health and experience Indian culture both inside and outside of the Manipal area. Examples of field trips outside the area include climbing mountains in Mysore and studying non-communicable diseases in Kundapur. The last official day of the program is June 2nd, where we are to depart from the Bangalore airport in transit back to the United States.

Everyone has a story of why they want to study abroad, and the beginning of mine is best told through the following quote by Dr. T.M.A Pai: “The wealth of education is something which you cannot exhaust by giving”. This quote by one of India’s most progressive thinkers, brings to light one of humanity’s most simple, yet profound concepts: the desire to learn is something that virtually all human beings have in common. In all corners of the earth, throughout all the eras of time, learning is one way that people have united to search for truth and understanding. I want to be armed with the weapon of education, but more importantly, I want to be able to give back and make a positive difference in the world. I believe that my STEP experience in Manipal, India would facilitate this desire, while helping me work towards learning and experiencing how to practice compassionate healthcare.
### Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projected Cost</th>
<th>Monetary Cost</th>
<th>Source of Funding</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Health Perspectives: India Program fee (covers meals, accommodations, program-related activities, field trips, and transportation)</td>
<td>$2,594</td>
<td>STEP grant ($2000) Distinction Scholarship ($594 of $1617.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airfare US to Bangalore roundtrip</td>
<td>$1313.60</td>
<td>Distinction Scholarship ($1023 remainder of Distinction Scholarship) Self-Funding ($290.60)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airfare—Mangalore to Bangalore, roundtrip</td>
<td>$163.00</td>
<td>Self-Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board (Cost of meals not included in program fee)</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>Self-Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and Supplies</td>
<td>$156</td>
<td>Self-Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Expenses</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>Self-Funding</td>
</tr>
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While the timetable and my resources will make this program feasible, my only limiting resource is the funding—the projected cost of my program exceeds the value my STEP grant alone.

The justification of aforementioned fees is straightforward. The program fee covers most meals, lodgings, as well as program-related activities, field trips, and transportation. The budget table lists further projected costs not included in the program fee, including books, supplies, and airfare. The source of funding will come primarily from external sources: the STEP grant and my stipend through the Distinction Scholarship. The Distinction Scholarship was awarded to me upon my matriculation at The Ohio State University, and covers the full cost of attendance as well as a stipend of $1617.00 for miscellaneous expenses. The STEP grant will be used to subsidize the cost of the program fee from $2594 to $594. The Distinction Scholarship stipend will be used to cover the remainder of the program fee as well as the majority of the plane ticket to Bangalore. The detailed schematic is depicted below. The remainder of the money not covered by external funding will be covered through self-funding and is projected to be approximately $1,059.60.

**Impact of the Distinction Scholarship ($1,617.00)**

$1617.00  
$594.00 (Program Fee remainder)  
- $1313.60 (Plane ticket from US to Bangalore)  
-290.60

The negative value indicates that all of the grants have been used up and the remaining $290.60 will be covered via self-funding.

**Reporting back**

During my time in India, I will be actively reporting back and documenting my experiences and activities via blogging and scrapbooking. However, I know this is an experience that will not end when my plane lands back in the United States. I will be openly speaking to prospective students in the Public Health department, at the STEP fair and the Study Abroad
Expo about my time in India to promote interest and encourage participation in this program. Furthermore, I will be working with my scholarship group (Distinction Scholars through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion) to create a study abroad program sponsored by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for other ODI scholars regarding diversity, healthcare, and culture in India. While this plan is still in the works, I hope to establish it before I leave the university so that others will be able to have the same opportunity I had.