

TESTIMONIAL

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I was fortunate to spend nearly half a year, from November 2010 through March 2011 as a Fulbright Scholar at the Universidad de Concepción. While I came here to teach and conduct research at their Center for Environmental Research (EULA), I'm leaving with new research collaborations with several individuals in the university's Chemistry and Oceanography departments, in addition to those that developed at EULA. I've also become good friends with another US Fulbright Scholar and a previous US Fulbright Scholar, who keeps coming back to Chile, as I fully intend to do as well.

Chile is a physically spectacular country, but it's the people that I'll come back for. These personal relationships with Chileans began even before I got here, with the Chilean Fulbright Office. My wife and I were picked up at the airport in Concepción and taken to an apartment that EULA staff had arranged for us to use, and had even stocked it with food for the next few days – including a bottle of excellent Chilean wine. And since then several faculty, staff, and students at the university have made it a point to make both my wife and myself as comfortable as possible during our time in Chile.

The biggest highlight, in half a year of highlights, of our time in Chile was when my wife and I participated in a Chilean study of environmental change in Patagonia. The beauty of the setting was almost beyond description, and the commitment of the scientists to carefully chronicle changes in the health of the environment – in order to protect it – was equally impressive. But I was most impressed with the students, who could work in the field for twelve hours, go dancing until four in the morning, and then be back at work a couple hours after that.

However, what most impressed me about the Chilean students that I interacted with was their seriousness about and total commitment to careers in science. This initially became apparent to me when I met several Chilean students who had been selected as Fulbright Scholars at the Thanksgiving dinner hosted by the US Embassy. It became even more apparent to me when I served on a panel that interviewed Chilean students who had applied for Fulbright scholarships to do Ph.D. research in the US, because I would have accepted anyone of them that wanted to work with our group. But what truly solidified my very positive impression of Chilean students was when I taught a short course during the summer session at EULA. The class was intense: covering a semester's worth of material in a week, with class lasting all day, and heavy assignments every night. Then on the final day, each student gave a formal scientific presentation on their independent study of the sources, biogeochemical cycling, and toxicity of a specific pollutant in Chile. Every one of their presentations was excellent, and a couple of them were comparable to those of a senior scientist with years of experience presenting at scientific meetings. So I am now hoping that one of those students will become a Fulbright Scholar and conduct their Ph.D. research with our group back in the US.