

**Comments for the Madrid 50th Anniversary Luncheon**  
**Max Elsenheimer, WIP Student, Spring 2017, UW**

I would first like to thank the UCM administrators, as well as the WIP staff Amy, Melissa, Mamen and Carlota for putting together this wonderful event today, and for everything they have done for us over the past school year. I would also like to thank all of the past WIP alumni as well as the administrators from our home campuses for making the long journey to celebrate with us today, although I'm sure it wasn't *too* difficult to be convinced to travel to Spain for a few days on "business".

I would like to start by talking about the WIPT staff a little more in depth, and recognize what they do for us day in and day out, 7 days a week, some for many, many years. The members of the staff are like mothers to us, and in many ways they actually are. For example,

- They help call the doctor to set up appointments for us when we are sick
- They let us try, fail and learn from our mistakes, but are always there waiting to help when we get in over our heads
- They even set up "playdates" with other Spanish students to help us make local friends and practice Spanish (Some people just call them *intercambios*).

These examples only show a fraction of their dedication to their jobs and the care they do it with, and from all of us students we thank you for putting up with us.

As we are here today celebrating the WIP program, I would like to talk about what this special program means to me. Deciding if and where I was studying abroad wasn't a difficult decision for me- my older sister Megan was a WIPPER 5 years ago just like the rest of us, and would incessantly talk about how incredible the program was. Although it was difficult, she stressed how much it improved not only her Spanish, but also her global understanding. This summer she has an internship in Washington D.C. with the Pan America Health Organization operating solely in Spanish, and in the fall she begins her medical residency. She attributes much of her success to the WIP program. Although my sister's experiences were incredible and have led her to success, I too have my own experiences and opinions.

I can sum up my feelings about the WIP program in one word: **Pride**. The best way for me to define why is not using my own words, rather those of friends back home and other students throughout Europe. When talking about and comparing study abroad programs, I have received *legitimate* comments such as, and I quote from text messages, "Max *actually* learns stuff in his program because it's difficult". "We've been betting if you're ever going to leave your program and come back to Madison". "So you're actually immersed in the culture eh?" (Yes, I am from Minnesota) or my favorite, "Oh (insert explicative) Max it's 6am, you should probably leave the club because you have Complu class in two and a half hours".

As crude and direct as these comments are I beam with pride each and every time I receive them, as they are remarks that students of most other programs don't receive. They are a testament to the quality of education and cultural immersion that WIP exposes us to both inside and outside of the classroom. Our coordinators and Complutense teachers provide us with the tools to return to the United States and be successful worldly citizens and students. The reputation of the program remains that of the highest quality throughout the decades, and after having the pleasure of completing the WIP program I am confident that it will only get stronger for the next fifty years.

Thank you.