Essay 1

**Doing your IQP off-campus offers opportunities to learn and grow, but also presents challenges, both academically, and personally. Please reflect on a challenging experience you have overcome. What was challenging about this experience, and how did you manage to work through it, even if the outcome was not what you had hoped for?**

I still remember the dizzying excitement and the delirious smile plastered on my face the day I was approved to start my high school’s VEX Robotics team. With this opportunity robotics soon became a part of my life and a part of my heart. Robotics inspired me to pursue my goals in life, and keep my head up. That’s not to say that it was all fun and games. Weeks of advertising and rudimentary fundraising had only garnered a resounding five people consistently showing up to meetings. After spending weeks talking to different students during classes and activity fairs, the robotics teams soon started to grow, but now controlling the team became a problem. Not only was I one of a few women in many of my programming and engineering classes, I was now team captain of my male-dominated robotics team. My teammates did not take me seriously as captain. I was solely responsible for hearing everyone’s voice, teaching and encouraging the team, signing up for tournaments, scouting for alliance teams, fundraising, advertising for more members, and keeping the team on task. When I would suggest an edit to our code, many times omy teammates would continue with their own agenda and ignore me. Frustrated, I set out on making my voice heard even if no one was listening. I empowered others to take leadership positions. I struggled with knowing when to let others lead and when to compromise or stand my ground.

After getting over my initial reservations of having to lead such a large team, I gained the confidence to make school-wide announcements and speak in front of the whole robotics team. From this experience, I learned that I won’t always have all the answers, which is okay. Learning from others results in a truly brilliant amalgamation of unique and diverse perspectives. This is vital in fostering a communicative milieu, engendering my intellect. I enforced an open, judgment-free zone to ensure the members felt safe and welcome. This was effective because the student was able to communicate, work, and learn from each other easily. There were many times I thought of quitting, but I'm grateful every day that I didn't. I've grown into a more knowledgeable and confident person because of this experience and I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

There was no greater high than seeing our robot make it to nationals after a myriad failed attempts. Seeing my fellow team members take pride in our team is a feeling of euphoria. We became unified in our love of robotics, our ability to build something so much greater than any one of us. We created not only a robot but a family. This is when I felt like I was meant to be part of this team; it was this undeniable, inexplicable connection. We hadn’t known each other when we formed the team. We nodded our heads, acknowledged each other, we didn’t really feel comfortable with each other at the time. But as the build season came, and the weeks progressed we came closer. We bonded through many bleary-eyed late-night cram sessions, frustrations of our code-breaking, and eventually the joys of seeing our robot compete. But through every heated discussion, high five, every hug, and every laugh we became more like family. This is what I want to get out of IQP: the connections I’ll make with my fellow peers. IQP would allow me a medium where I can immerse myself in other cultures, living through experiences unfathomable to me at the moment. I want to use the tenacity and confidence I’ve gained from my experiences and grow into someone better equipped to work with a team, while also becoming more cultured. Through IQP I hope to find a new story to add in my memories, a new joke I can look back on. I know I’ll make my share of trials and tribulations, but this experience has the chance to bring people together. When my IQP team has disagreements I will use my skills in open communication to make sure everyone is heard to easily resolve the conflict. People who are different in their own ways, different colors, genders, and ethnicities. IQP will be a fantastic experience for me, especially in New Zealand, as I understand that I will get from the experience what I put into it. I’ll use my fostering leadership and communication skills to become a well-rounded and more diverse thinker. I’ve learned the power and beauty of coming together as a team to create a lasting project and the undeniable bond of those who have gone through it together.

Essay 2

**On most teams, different team members have different points of view about what the team should be doing, how the team should be doing things, and what direction the project should be headed. If you have experienced this, how did you deal with it? Be specific. Looking back, what if anything, would you do differently and why? If you have never experienced this on a team, how would deal with it if it occurred on your IQP? Again, be specific.**

Dancing allows me to express myself. It allows me to create. It is my passion, my art. When my steps are timed perfectly with the music, I feel perfect harmony. Every time I perform I give part of myself to the audience. I’m sharing my heart and personality with the viewers, and every time I do, I fall deeper in love with dancing. So when I was asked to choreograph our final dance team's routine senior year, I couldn’t contain my happiness. The only caveat was that I was to work with one of my fellow teammates to do so. I speak the language of pirouettes and pliés as the melodic flute fills the room and I sway to the rhythm of the music. My co-choreographer however, understood the brash base of contemporary hip hop. Needless to say, our dance styles didn’t mesh well. I felt frustrated by the notion that I couldn’t take charge and choreograph the dance the way I wanted to. After all, this was my senior dance and this was the last ever performance we would ever put on as a team.

I would suggest leaps and twirls to the music and my co-choreographer quickly shot my ideas down. I felt inferior, as though my vision or ideas weren’t good enough. I thought that maybe I didn’t have enough experience to be a qualified choreographer. As time passed I only felt my agitation grow because my ideas weren’t taken seriously. I felt like we were spending more time arguing then actually working on the dance. We realized that the performance was just right around the corner and we had to have a finished piece soon. After many discussions, we came to the conclusion that we both had to compromise and not just push our own agendas. We had to make the most out of the opportunity we were given.

We ended up choreographing a Jazz style dance that utilized hints of lyrical and contemporary tones to create a piece that accented both our dance styles. We showcased my beloved spins while also exemplifying hip hop inspired gesticulations, essentially highlighting what we both loved about dance and our preferred styles. Our end product was not what I had originally envisioned it to be, but I’m proud of what we accomplished when we were able to compromise and work together.

During IQP, I’ll have to work with others who don’t see eye to eye with me and I have to compromise and learn from them. This experience brought me out of my comfort zone by exposing me to different dance styles. IQP will definitely do the same, as I’ll be living in a foreign country working with people I’ve never met before. Looking back on it I would have done things differently. I should have put myself in my co-choreographer’s shoes from the start. It was her last time choreographing a dance as well and I should have respected her ideas while also immediately expressing concern for her pushing my ideas aside. If something like this occurred during IQP I would forge open communication to find the best plan of action, to express my ideas while also keeping others involved. I understand that I cannot force everything to go my way and that compromise is the key to teamwork.