Querida Universitat de Barcelona

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Querido Universitat de Barcelona,

I want to start my letter off by saying thank you. I have so many things to thank you for and I’m not entirely sure where to begin, but thank you for becoming my second home in Barcelona. At half past seven every morning I took the U17 bus to your stop. I walked past the Dartmouth office, through the courtyard, and into our freezing room four days a week for close to three months. For the first time in my life I can honestly say that I did not once dread coming to class. Because of you, I noticed so many changes in myself. You probably noticed that I sat in the front row. That was a big deal for me. I willingly sat in the front row every day and anyone from home can tell you that I LOVE the back row. I love being able to observe everyone and I love having the freedom to let my mind wander, however, I did not have that same desire while in your classroom. I wanted to get better at the language and devote all my time and energy into material that was so unfamiliar to me. I stayed after hours, even on Monday’s and Wednesday’s when we had class for 6 hours a day! I went up the winding stairs, into Isabel’s office, and she helped me with subjunctive tense and relative phrases. I did not hide from what I did not understand and that is something I have always struggled with. You gave me the courage to face my challenges in a new environment head on and I have taken these skills back to Dartmouth with me.

In your classroom I learned the Spanish language but I also learned so much about the culture, history, and people of Spain. I acquired knowledge that I otherwise would not have had the chance to acquire had I taken the mirrored Spanish courses here at Dartmouth. Because of you I have decided to minor in Spanish. I’m currently taking Spanish 20. It is a literature class and is scarily similar to the literature class that we took at the university. I miss your class but I am grateful that your class led me to this one. I hope that I pursue the next four Spanish classes required for the minor with the same drive as I pursued the courses at your university. Your classroom also became the place where I developed life-long relationships. Spending 7 hours a day with the same students for ten weeks allowed me to really get to know the 22 people on my trip. They studied with me, they conversed with me, and they struggled with me… all in Spanish. Although we were all at different levels, we faced similar challenges and overcame them together. We shared most of the stories we had about our families and day to day experiences in
your classroom. We laughed, we cried, and we loved one another. In just short ten weeks, we loved each other as good friends do. You became our safe haven, our little America.

Since I have been back in America, I think about you almost everyday. Spanish 20 and COCO 21 have allowed me to thoroughly reflect on the experience and are constant reminders of you. Additionally, my friends from the LSA are constant reminders of you. I see them with less frequency, which is upsetting. There was something special about walking into that classroom everyday and the saddest thing about that, is at the time I had no idea. I had no idea that I would long for the times I spent in a learning environment in such a beautiful city, especially somewhere as simple as a classroom. We will return at some point, or at least I know I will. All in all, I want you to know that you changed me for the better and who knows? Maybe some day I’ll come back and never leave.

Atentamente,
Zoe Boocock