

Elon students earn Pulitzer Center fellowship to Ecuador

Addie Haney
Reporter

I will miss meandering through the open, European-esque plazas of Old Quito. I will miss the walks through the dozens of parks lined with joggers, dogs, futbol players and occasional couples. I will miss the sound of Spanish rattled off at lightning speed, the friendliness of Quito's people, the food and stunning scenery that surrounded me at every turn.

All things considered, it was both an enjoyable and successful ten days in Quito, Ecuador, documenting the education system in this South American country for a fellowship from the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting.

While in Ecuador, my partner and I spent ten days alongside members from the iMetropoli program interacting with and interviewing students (the children were the cutest), teachers and alumni from the Escuela Nuevos Horizontes del Sur, a tiny, rural private school on a winding and mountainous 45-minute drive outside Quito.

I also spoke with professionals involved in the higher education system in Ecuador, including a member of the university accreditation board, the head of a language immersion program for both exchange students and Ecuadorians and an American profes-

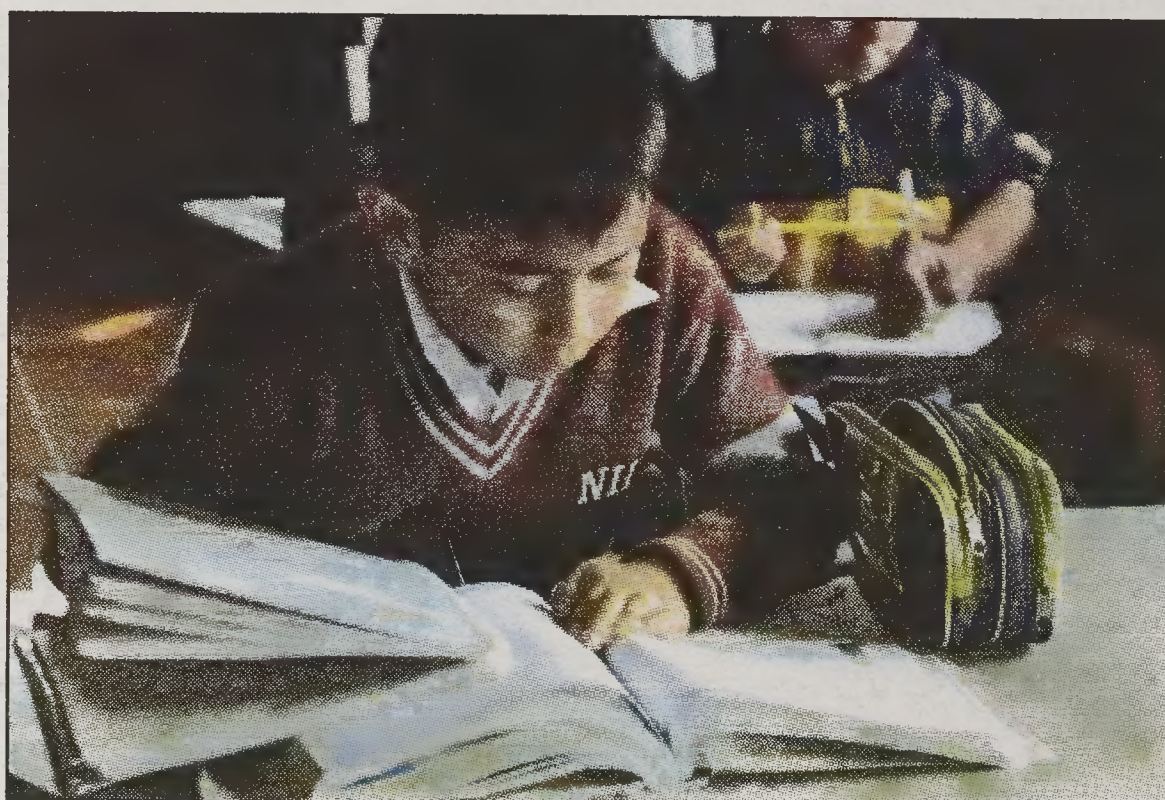
sor who helped revamp the teacher training programs in dozens of schools across Ecuador and other nations.

The interviews helped shape the narrative of a nation that for many years, and even still to this day, lacked quality education for its citizens, but now is trying to turn the tide to provide a better life for its people.

Once upon a time, children in rural areas who spoke an indigenous language struggled to succeed in a Spanish-speaking school system. Now with compulsory education mandated by the nation's constitution and about 5 percent of the GDP spent on education—compared to the United States's 5.4 percent—students are learning, and some are even going on to receive degrees in higher education.

But even with these improvements, the Ecuadorian education system is vastly different from America's and I came away from the trip with a greater appreciation for our system, despite its many flaws.

Here, choice and opportunities abound. It would be very difficult to get funding by an Ecuadorian university to complete the type of trip from which I just returned. And with new changes in Ecuador's constitution and university accreditation process came a new entrance exam that determines a student's field of study for him or her. Emphasis on technical skills and science-related subjects leaves the chance to earn a liberal arts educa-



An Ecuadorian boy studies his textbook. Haney spent ten days interacting with students near Quito. ADDIE HANEY | Reporter

tion similar to Elon and other U.S. universities slim to none.

While the two systems are so different, the one thing both countries share is the passion of teachers trying to make a difference in a student's life. Education is clearly important to a successful future, and from listening to the principal and teachers of Escuela Nuevos Horizontes del Sur, who all teach multiple subjects to both primary and high

school students, I could sense the intense desire for making their students feel special and encouraging them to reach for their dreams.

Going to Quito was a great learning experience, and I came away from the trip with a greater appreciation for my education and the opportunities I've been afforded during my time at Elon. I'm also hopeful for Ecuador's future and the students seeking knowledge and a better education.

Tennis Mania: Australian Open creates unique atmosphere

Watkins
International Correspondent

MELBOURNE, Australia — At any time of the year, thousands of people travel to Melbourne, Australia, to experience its artsy culture, tasty cuisine, and breathtaking attractions. But in January, the main reason people flock to the city is for tennis.

Melbourne hosts the Australian Open, a year-long international tennis tournament. Players from around the globe compete in singles and doubles matches and prizes totaling 33 million Australian Dollars.

The Australian Open is about the experience. It gives people of all ages and backgrounds a piece of the sports culture as it spreads across the city, from hotels to parks.

For Brad Rees, the experience is everything. Rees, who lives three hours outside the city, made the journey to attend the Australian Open for the first time this year. He said he appreciates the sports culture of Melbourne and enjoys meeting people who share the same appreciation.

"Seeing all of [the tennis players] talent, young and old, and getting to know new people. People from different countries," Rees said. "It's all just having a

good time, really."

The city creates an environment for people to enjoy the tournament inside and outside the stadium. For those who cannot attend the competition itself, large television screens across the city give updates on the latest happenings with the tournament, and it is shown on every television in every bar in the city.

Cale Hutchings works at the Crown Hotel in Melbourne and has noticed a big difference in the atmosphere this month.

"It's really great for Crown," Hutchings said. "With the Crown tennis live site...it's really awesome. I think it's real-

ly exciting. Melbourne's a good place for it. A lot of people are here from around the world."

Signs advise Melbourne natives and incoming tourists to "Get Court Up" with the competition. Outside shopping centers, the faces of tennis stars are slapped on billboards advertising clothes and accessories.

"I just think it's amazing that we can actually have this in Australia," said Hutchings. "You see it overseas, you know Wimbledon and all that and how big it is, but you never really realize that [the Australian Open] just around the corner from where you are."