Summer 2010 was my opportunity to participate in an internship and to conduct thesis research, which took place over the span of two months in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. The site in which I worked was Akumal, Quintana Roo, just 90 miles south of Cancun. My internship work consisted of writing a grant for a non-profit organization that infuses the tourism industry with practices in ecological conservation. The town of Akumal serves as the second largest turtle nesting area in the peninsula, thus there are organizations that often monitor their protection and the protection of the local flora and fauna. My job was to find a grant that would offer funding to organizations that work with preserving and protecting the plants, animals or environment of Akumal, Mexico but specifically, would apply to turtle protection.

Akumal also served as the site where I conducted research for my thesis project. While conducting this research I spent a majority of my time working on Akumal Bay, the most visited of the bays in Akumal. My research looks at the impact of tourism development on the people in the community of Akumal. This would include those who either live or work there. My methodologies consisted of conducting interviews, making observations as well as examining some data (internet based sources). I interviewed men, women, mothers, fathers, hotel maids, taxi drivers, concierge, security guards, hotel managers, restaurant owners, etc. Among my findings I discovered that almost all of the interviewees were of Mayan decent and most had migrated to the area to be a part of the tourism industry.

The experience was much more than I had imagined. It was unforgettable. Of course I was faced with ups and downs throughout the process, but fortunately I had the opportunity to combine my research and internship while working with individuals at various levels in the industry. I highly recommend that students, who plan on writing a thesis or a thesis project, consider participating in an internship in a field that relates to their research.