

Dear Mr Koopman

Firstly, I would like to display my gratitude for the opportunity to travel abroad and have such a great experience. I now understand that academic excellence and hard work creates great opportunities. I would like this kind of trip to be a motivation to other undergraduates that hard work pays off. In Ireland I acquired the privilege to learn a new language which is Irish. We engaged in conversations and oral performance to reinforce our learning. Our teacher Aishling was extremely passionate about her language and teaching us, within a week we had learned the basics of greeting and short dialogue. I was greatly informed about their history and how people in Ireland were colonized and not allowed to speak their native language for years. UCD, which stands for University College Dublin established international summer school to preserve the Irish language and teach their language to people around the world. This taught me about the importance of taking pride on one's own language, origin and culture. In this way we know who we are and this is part of our identity. This is similar to what occurred in South Africa, but what makes me proud is the ability of our countries to fight for our own language and culture, to be proud of it and not feel inferior but embrace each and every part of it. Every afternoon we had festival evenings where we learned about the cultural dances such as the Sean-nos dance, their traditional music and poetry. The people were very welcoming to us and offered us great hospitality. They were also interested in knowing about our South African languages, culture and traditions. I also realised that people in Ireland take care of their country, the streets are clean and not littered, in every kitchen they separate their waste to be able to recycle and they are conscious of personal space and respect each other's space. There is also low crime rate because I remember the last night we spent in the city we went to City Centre with our teachers and we had to meet up with them at a specific venue. When we walked around we felt safe and free to even take pictures at night because it was safe, and the sun goes down at 10:30 at night which was awesome. The city of Dublin seemed developed and the scenery was beautiful, we went to a harbour, Museum and saw ancient buildings which was all exquisite. I also had an opportunity to learn a lot about the ladies I was with. We created such a strong bond and sisterhood. We supported each other and got to know more about each other on a personal level. The friendship that I now have with them is also a gift I acquired through this trip. The trip to Ireland made me realize that I am capable of achieving anything I want regardless of adversities I may face. After losing my mother last year I felt my life was shattered and lacked purpose. Now I am aware that my journey can have an impact on someone else who may have struggled with the loss of a loved one and strive to do better for themselves. I realized that opportunities are out there I must just be willing to work hard. I feel grown as a young lady and I am now inspired to write a book that I have always wanted to write. Now I am more self-assured and have no doubt that I am capable. My dreams will become a reality through my hard work, perseverance and resilience.

Yours Sincerely Nondumiso Mthimkhulu

