

### **Please introduce yourself (where are you coming from? how old are you? what are you studying?)**

My name is Molly Skinner-Day. I am 28 years old and grew up in Bellingham, Washington. I am in the Reproductive and Family Health track of the Department of Population and Family Health at Mailman School of Public Health.

### **Why did you choose France? How did you learn about the EHESP?**

I learned about the program at EHESP through information sessions at Mailman and discussion with the program coordinator in New York. I was interested in coming to France for the opportunity to improve my French in a professional setting and to have the opportunity to study the culture and policy environment of Public Health in Europe. As a reproductive health student, I have often seen the US compared to France specifically for reproductive health outcomes, and I was interested in seeing what sort of factors influence that on the ground.

### **What are the reasons you want to come to the EHESP?**

I was very excited about the chance to get involved in a project that had both national elements (through the NYC Department of Health) and international elements (EHESP). I perceived it as a project that would contribute to both organizations, and allow me to gain skills in a variety of areas. I also thought that the support both Columbia and EHESP were putting into the exchange were likely to make it a good program in which I would continue to feel supported, and it definitely has turned out that way!

### **What have you learned as a foreign exchange student? How do you plan to share your experiences with other students when you return?**

This is not the first time I have lived abroad, and, compared to living in a developing country, the transition to life in France was very easy for me. Just explore a lot to get settled in! I recommend getting out of Rennes to see other parts of Brittany, using covoiturage to get around so you can meet more people, and getting off the beaten path! Paris has a lot of allure, but this is a big and beautiful country, so I think making the most of the weekends is very important. Also, go see Les Machines de l'Île in Nantes. In Rennes, check out Marché des Lices and all the other neighborhood markets!! They're amazing!

When I return, I plan to share a lot of what I've learned with other students just through discussions in class, and to make crêpes for my friends as much as possible!

### **Is it necessary to speak French before coming?**

Yes, at least a little for communication in daily life. At EHESP it is not necessary, as many people here speak excellent English. However, I found that speaking French more has helped me to make more friends, become more engaged in activities in the area, and to communicate with faculty at EHESP who do not speak English.

### **What are your future academic and career goals?**

I have one year left at Columbia and will be focusing on qualitative research and program evaluation. After graduating, I hope to find work in adolescent health programming in either the US or an international setting.

### **What is your favorite thing about France? Your less favorite? How does it compare to your country?**

I have too many favorite things about France to list! The crêpes, the cider, the salted caramel sauce, the cheese, the farmer's markets, the fabulous bread, the beautiful small towns, the friendly people... the only thing I don't like is how much people smoke, but I suppose as a public health student I'm obligated to hate that. It's been very interesting learning about public health issues in a country with a well-established system of public health care, but I think one of the biggest things that I've learned is not to romanticize their welfare systems or the social attitudes behind them too much. Plenty of public health work to do here as well... now if only I can convince an employer here that no one else in Europe can do some of that work, so they need me...