

## **Letter to Board:**

Dear the Board of Directors of the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation,

I would like to extend my deepest, most heartfelt gratitude for your grant towards my DRCLAS project with Harvard University in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Sao Paulo is an expensive city (the tenth most expensive city in the world, to be exact), so without the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation, I simply wouldn't have been able to be there.

I really feel so incredibly lucky to have designed this international work service experience abroad, and feel honored that the JJCF liked the idea. They always tell entrepreneurs that you have to step out onto the limb and have faith that it will be there; I did, and the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation was there. And that meant more to me than I can express. Especially because not everyone in my immediate network thought I should pursue my Brazil opportunity – not everyone understood or supported it, and some even told me to not pursue it – but I knew I could go and have success with a project like this. It was so heartening to know that there were people who cared about my project and my development in this way.

My experience in Brazil gave me a new perspective, and renewed professional confidence. It helped show me that I can make valuable contributions to program design, international education, student relations, and cross-cultural relations at high-level institutions. As I enter my 30's, this confidence is particularly important to me, and especially as a woman. As Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg noted in her book *Lean In*, confidence makes all the difference. I can already see the difference in what opportunities are available to me and how big I dream now. I'm articulating new roles and possibilities that I simply wouldn't have thought of before.

My plans for the coming year are to leverage my new accomplishments and professional confidence to start my own educational consulting company (its tentative title is 'Girasol Consulting'). My first target will be to collaborate with the University of Virginia, where my fiancé and I will be headed this fall when he starts his MBA program at the Darden School of Business. I've started on this journey by consulting for educational NGO's, and I'm also teaching a writing course for teens this summer.

In sum, my Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation experience meant a lot to me in a professional sense, but it also means a great deal to me in a personal sense.