



CASA GRANADA ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



BROWN



Consortium for
Advanced Studies Abroad

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Located at the heart of the prestigious University of Granada, the CASA Granada Center offers academic programs for students at all levels of Spanish language proficiency, from beginner to bilingual. Through intentional and innovative programming, students are encouraged to engage with the local and university communities in meaningful and collaborative ways and to reflect on their roles as global citizens. The city's beauty, manageable size, welcoming atmosphere, and geographical-historical-cultural setting provide the perfect environment for language immersion and personal growth.

AT-A-GLANCE

ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

Students can enroll in five different programs from beginner to advanced at University of Granada and the Modern Languages Center, affiliated with the University.

VOLUNTEERING & RESEARCH INTERNSHIPS

Unique volunteering and research opportunities are available in Granada, with an emphasis on STEM-related internships at University of Granada state-of-the-art labs.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The program offers a variety of excursions and hands-on activities, deepening ties with the local community and with an increased focus on climate action and sustainability.

FEATURE STORY

An alumna shares her experience participating in a STEM Research Internship, resulting in her co-authoring a publication and impacting the community in unexpected ways.

LOOKING AHEAD

Priorities include engaging students, program alumni, partner institutions' leadership and faculty, and the local community, in collaborations that will enrich the CASA Granada programs for all participants.

ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

Students are able to choose among five academic programs according to their level of Spanish language proficiency and their specific goals.

The **Intensive Spanish Language Program** has proven to be an exceptional opportunity for students arriving with beginner to intermediate levels who wish to rapidly advance their Spanish language skills.

The **Spanish Language and Culture** and the **Hispanic Studies** programs allow students to take both language and elective classes.

The **University Studies** and **Translation & Interpreting** programs provide advanced level students with a direct enrollment experience at the University of Granada.

All programs begin with an intensive language course and may be complemented with one of our custom CASA courses and/or a STEM Research Internship.

- The **“Identity, Diversity and Prejudice in Contemporary Spanish Society: A Multidisciplinary Approach”** CASA course, focusing on invisibilized communities in Spain, was successfully piloted in Fall 2023.
- Students visited the sites of Federico García Lorca’s birth and execution as part of the **“Grappling with Spain’s Traumatic Past: The Spanish Civil War, Francoism and Historical Memory”** CASA course in Spring 2024.
- According to student feedback, each of these CASA Granada courses gave them the context to **understand current Spanish society and their own personal interactions** within it.
- Several students took advantage of the many Islamic Studies courses offered in Granada, focusing on topics including **Muslim art, women in contemporary Arab societies, and Arabic language and translation.**
- Students found **CASA Granada’s in-house Spanish language tutoring** particularly helpful as they prepared for presentations, papers and exams.





#2

University of Granada's ranking in Spain according to the 2023 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU).

50%

of students concentrating in **STEM fields** (38% health-related concentrations in 2023-2024 and 20% computer & data science concentrations in Spring '24)

50%

of students in the Intensive Spanish Language Program **finished with a C1-C2, the most advanced levels** of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL)

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the number of languages aside from Spanish studied in the past 2 years (**Arabic, Chinese, German, Russian & Catalán**)



VOLUNTEERING & RESEARCH

Students at all levels of Spanish can apply to do research or engage in volunteering opportunities. Students volunteer at local schools and various organizations in and around Granada, working closely with the Student Services Coordinator to identify an opportunity that aligns with their interests and their schedules. Students involved in the STEM Research Internships are placed in labs across the University and have the opportunity to be involved in projects related to their general fields of study. Through these hands-on experiences, students gain new skills, vocabulary and contacts.

Two new sites for volunteering were added this year working with elementary school children at the public *Colegio Fuentenueva* and with *Casa Cuna*, a non-profit organization that serves marginalized migrant youth.

New STEM Research Internships were undertaken in Artificial Intelligence, Food Sciences, Marketing and Optics. The UGR is ranked among the top universities in the world in Food Science & Technology (48th), Mathematics (top 100), Biomedical Engineering (101-150), Computer Science & Engineering (101-150) according to the 2023 ARWU.

Students engaged in research in 7 cutting-edge research labs across the University of Granada:

Applied Physics Department: Food Science Lab

Mind, Brain and Behavior Research Center

Biomedical Research Center

Institute of Biotechnology

Andalucian Research Institute in Data Science &

Computational Intelligence

Optics Department: Color Imaging Lab

Business School: Marketing & Social Change Group

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

CASA Granada offers a program of cultural activities that are carefully and intentionally designed to give students the opportunity to engage with significant topics and communities through the local lens. Our excursion destinations are all within Andalucía to provide a deeper understanding of the region's history and its natural beauty and resources. With an increased focus on climate action and sustainability, several of our trips and hands-on activities take students off the beaten path to more remote gems in southern Spain.

Some of this year's highlights:

Our Cádiz excursion included **marine animal rescue simulation and beach clean-up activities.**

An intercultural exchange with local Romany peers provided a unique opportunity for conversation and insight.

Students visited an **organic orange orchard** in the nearby *Valle de Lecrín*.

Our visit to the **Granada Mosque** led to a very special encounter for students.

Visits to **Córdoba and Sevilla** were highlights of the Al-Andalus Seminar during orientation.





*“I had passed by Granada's mosque many times, and never knew what it was. Having this opportunity to learn more about a religion that's painted in a complex light, to learn more about Granada's history, and to visit such a beautiful place was exceptional. **We were invited to attend Friday services and lunch, which I did with a friend, and had one of my favorite experiences in Granada meeting warm and open people from all around the world.** If more people had the opportunity to get to know people across differences in this way, I think our world would be a better place.”*

*“I thought the gitano lecture, and **learning about gitanos in Granada/Spain was one of the most interesting things I learned during the whole semester.** I had no knowledge about gitano culture or history before this semester, and I feel like I left with a better understanding and interest in learning more about this group, especially after hearing about the lived experience from the students we met.”*

*“I didn't realize it at the start of the program, but **the influence from other cultural sectors that constitute the current Granada culture are so important.** Seeing the Alhambra and other primary cities of "Al-Andalus" was a very, very cool experience in retrospect that allowed me to learn more about the history and cultural roots of this region. I definitely am glad that I did this!”*

The 'Práctica' that Put Me on a New Path

by Orly Richter, Brown University

“During my time in Granada in 2023, I worked with investigators in the *Parasitología Molecular* group under UGR's Instituto de Biotecnología. My project focused on evaluating the presence of the parasite *Angiostrongylus cantonensis* in the Valencian snail population. This parasite was known to be brought into Spain in its adult form through Valencia's shipping activity, but knowledge of the parasite's life cycle in Spain was very limited. Our project found evidence of *A. cantonensis* DNA in multiple species of snails, which showed that the parasite was not merely being carried into Spain in its adult form but was also reproducing within the country, as snails act as hosts for the intermediate stages of the life cycle of *A. cantonensis*. This finding has significant implications for public health measures in Spain, as *A. cantonensis* causes disease in humans and the snail species in which we found the parasite present are commonly eaten as part of Spanish cuisine.



When I started my *práctica*, I had no experience in a laboratory environment outside of a couple lab-based classes that I had taken at my home university. My time in the lab at UGR was my first experience with biological research, and I fell in love with both the day-to-day lab work and the broader questions that could be answered with the skills I was learning. The whole team in the lab welcomed me, whether that meant showing me where to find reagents or answering a question about Spanish grammar, and working in a Spanish-speaking environment with a group that consisted almost exclusively of native speakers was one of the most important factors in how much I was able to improve my language skills while in Granada.

Even though most of the group was fluent in English, I spoke only Spanish in the lab with their support, even though it often meant that they had to wait for me to fumble through more complex sentences. My mentor, Mercedes, answered questions about both lab work and Spanish, and she took care to include me in projects that weren't related to my own just to help broaden my understanding of the research in their lab.

My work in the lab encouraged me to apply for internships in biological research, and I spent the following summer and school year conducting research in similar laboratory environments. More recently, I began my full-time job in a laboratory studying cancer biology, an opportunity that I never would have pursued had it not been for my exposure to research while in Granada.

Mercedes supported me in writing a recommendation for a program with the NIH that I am now participating in, and she has supported my growth far past my time in the lab with her.

Around 6 months after I left Granada, the project that I worked on was submitted to an academic journal, and a few months later it was accepted and published. At the time, I was deep in experiments for my biology honors thesis and feeling quite overwhelmed with the process. Having this article published, with my name high up on the list of authors, gave me both a real sense of pride in the work I had done in Granada and helped me find motivation that I needed to continue the work on my thesis project by reminding me of the enjoyment that I had found in research when I first started.

The research that I conducted at UGR was an amazing opportunity for my own personal development and simultaneously a path through which I could give something back to the community in Granada.

AT A BROADER LEVEL, I WAS ALSO INCREDIBLY PROUD TO HAVE WORKED ON A PROJECT THAT HAD REAL VALUE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EFFORTS IN SPAIN; I FELT THAT I HAD CONTRIBUTED SOMETHING MEANINGFUL TO A COMMUNITY AND A COUNTRY THAT HAD DONE SO MUCH FOR ME.

My práctica was easily one of the most valuable experiences I had throughout my semester in Granada. Not only did it help me improve my language skills and my laboratory techniques, it also gave me the chance to engage with people from the local community and create lasting relationships. On my last day in the lab, I left with promises from Mercedes that it was not an *adios* but rather an *hasta pronto*, an interaction that really signified to me that I had found a community in Granada that would not disappear when I came back to the U.S.”



ORLY RICHTER, PROFESSOR
MERCEDES GÓMEZ,
PROFESSOR EMERITUS
ANTONIO OSUNA



LOOKING AHEAD

In the coming year, the CASA Granada Team is committed to further developing resources and making fine-tune program adjustments that will support our mission to facilitate students' academic, cultural, and experiential education; their Spanish language learning; and their personal growth. With an emphasis on relationship building, our goals include engaging students, program alumni, partner institutions' leadership and faculty, and the local community in collaborations that will enrich the CASA Granada program for all participants.

With inclusion and belonging at the very heart of everything we do, an important goal for 2024-2025 is to increase and diversify our enrollments from CASA schools and to ensure that the program thrives through continued outreach and networking and, most importantly, through prioritizing sustainable measures that will support a healthy environment and planet.

2024-2025 Goals:

- Continue to prioritize the **inclusion of all student identities** in every aspect of our program.
- Increase efforts to **center climate action and sustainability** in our operations and extra-curricular programming.
- **Expand and facilitate collaborations with the University of Granada** on multiple levels.
- Enhance program visibility through **campus outreach and social media**
- Create a **CASA Granada alumni network**.

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