Statement of Justification for the Winter Intersession 2009 Galapagos Trip

I have always been a nature and biology enthusiast. I love anything that has to do with plants, animals, and the environment. My longing to bring home a fresh species every couple of weeks has, to the rest of my family’s annoyance, covered every empty spot in my house with some sort of fish swimming in an aquarium or plant growing in a pot. I have taken any opportunity I could to learn more about the species around me. How do they grow? Where do they really come from? How have they changed over the years? My research brought me to the Galapagos Islands and Charles Darwin’s studies on Evolution. When I was in the tenth grade I did my first project on Charles Darwin. My group had to look up how Darwin studied evolution and his theories behind it, but we also did an extensive study on the Galapagos. We researched as much as we could on the island, finding photographs, watching videos, and reading various journals on the subject. I saw for the first time the beauty lying on this discreet island and vowed that I would one day go to see the wildlife in Ecuador.

The Galapagos Program has attracted me since before I even applied to Macaulay Honors. I wanted to apply to study abroad in my freshman year but held back, thinking that I should probably obtain a better biology background first. I became a Biology Major and, over the course of two and a half years, took most of the major’s required classes. I studied everything from molecular biology to physiology. One class that I have not yet taken but is mandatory for my major is evolution, which I wish to learn in the Galapagos Islands. What better way to study the theory of evolution in the very place where
evolution was born? How could I look past an opportunity to follow the footsteps of the Father of Evolution, and at the same time, directly observe the striking fauna and flowers known solely to the Galapagos Islands?

Brooklyn College allows students who go on this trip to use the credits gotten from it as an alternative to the evolution class necessary for Biology majors. Thus, this study abroad class will help me complete the requirements for my major in an amazing, unique environment most students will never get to go to. The three credits earned in the Galapagos will go towards the final credits needed to fulfill my Biology major requirements. I will also learn the theory of evolution much more thoroughly and with more understanding than I ever could from textbooks and lecture halls. By taking this class abroad, I will be able to connect the lessons of physiology, genetics, molecular biology, field studies, and other classes that I have already taken in the classroom to the real world.

Furthermore, there is a large field research component to the Galapagos trip, which I hope to take complete advantage of. In the future, I want to study the biological diversity of species in my own environment, but I have never done a lot of real field research. This program will teach me the scientific guidelines for field research and scientific reporting essential to a successful career in biological research. I hope to use the background knowledge that I have been given over the years to enhance my studies in the Galapagos and augment my ability to fruitfully study outside of the classroom. This trip would be an unparalleled college experience and I look forward to it wholeheartedly.