

In the summer of 2022 most Northwest College students were back home doing summer jobs or hanging out with friends and staying up too late. While they were doing that, I was accompanying Professor Greg Smith through the forests of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, assisting his archaeological work wherever and whenever needed. The trip was paid for by the college via a grant Professor Smith obtained. Among the things I learned about were the Maya culture of the past and present, archaeological field methods, and what it is like living in a foreign country. Spending June 21st to July 19th in a rented house in the city of Valladolid, Professor Smith continued his work at the Maya site of Santa Cruz. Our work primarily focused on mapping structures as well as surface-collecting ceramics and lithic artifacts. Santa Cruz was a small town that thrived roughly 1,000 years ago between the major sites of Chichen Itza and Ek Balam, both of which I got to visit. Learning more about this borderland between these two major Mayan powers helped me to understand the complexity of ancient Maya political boundaries. I intend to share my experiences and findings while working with Dr. Smith to provide insight into archaeology as a field and encourage future students to seek out college-funded opportunities abroad.