Elizabeth Cote never imagined she’d study at an eco resort in Costa Rica. She never thought her courses at the College would require her to coordinate a celebrity chefs weekend or intern at a small boutique hotel. But when she decided to major in hospitality and tourism management, new doors began to open.

“I didn’t have a strong direction when I first came to the College, but during my second semester I took the intro to hospitality course and that really solidified my interest in this field. The professor was super supportive, and I began to see that this could lead to so many opportunities.”

Elizabeth remembers a pivotal moment in her sophomore year: “Professor Pan was advising me about the classes I might take, and there was something he couldn’t answer. So, he called up the department chair, and before I knew it, there we were, the three of us, working on my schedule. We spent an hour getting it settled. That was amazing. When you hear people talk about personalized education at the College, that’s really what it means.”

Along with her coursework, she has tackled an array of internships, from working on the reservations desk at a local golf resort to acting as a concierge at a boutique hotel to managing the details of upscale weddings. In addition, Elizabeth has also been mentored by one of Charleston’s renowned restaurateurs.

“I’ve really had some amazing opportunities in this major.” One of her most powerful experiences was spending a month in Costa Rica studying small-scale resorts involved in eco tourism.

“I’ve learned so much from my classes, but I’ve enhanced my education that much more by being involved in the Club for Hospitality and Tourism (CHAT) and Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE). These organizations have allowed me to meet and network with business leaders. I can’t tell you how many times someone has said ‘Do you remember that speaker who came to class? I actually emailed him and I’m going talk to him about an internship.’ The connections that you make through those extracurricular activities are invaluable. It’s a great way to really find out what you want to do. You can listen all day in class, but if you don’t experience it firsthand, you really won’t know.”