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Studied in: Fall 2015
Graduates in May 2017
Dr. Brian Bugella Memorial Scholarship \$500

The only way a person can truly understand a different society, culture, or way of life, is to completely immerse themselves in it. That is why I feel that studying abroad was a phenomenal experience. I studied abroad in Glasgow Scotland in the Fall of 2015, and it was the most rewarding, and successful semester of my life. During my time in Scotland, I was also able to travel to 5 different countries, to try to see as much of the world as I possibly could.

During my time in Scotland, I was fortunate enough to not only be able to travel around Scotland, but also to five different countries in Europe. Being able to see these different countries first hand opened my eyes to how many diverse cultures the world has, even in such a small space. By taking an hour plane ride you could easily experience completely different people, cultures, and cities, each unique in their own way. Even within Scotland, traveling from Glasgow, the largest city in Scotland, to Isle of Skye in Northern Scotland showed major differences in the way people acted, and the language that they spoke. It was incredible to be able just to sit and people watch, to see the difference in the way people presented themselves.

One of the hardest questions that I have to answer is “which country is your favorite?” How does one choose a favorite when each country is wonderfully unique in its own way? Paris and London were both very lively cities, both having historic buildings and tourist attractions, but the way that people acted was very different from one another. People in London went out of their way to help you find what you

were looking for when they saw you looking at a map and were very lively and fast-paced, where in Paris we didn't have anyone approach us, and it seemed more laid back. Both cities had amazing food, but again it was very different. In London I ate a lot of traditional fish and chips, where in Paris it was a lot of crepes, croissants, and sandwiches, all which were incredible. Even though these are 2 cities and well known, and have some similar characteristics, it is their diverse cultures that make them all wonderfully unique.

Being able to attend a school in a foreign country, and seeing the differences in the institutions is another amazing quality of studying abroad. I attended the University of Glasgow, which is one of the oldest universities in all of Scotland. The University in general is very different from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. One way that it was different is that in most classes you would have one paper and one exam that would make up the entire grade. This made exam time much more stressful as a student because every exam was worth 70% of your grade. Another big difference was that there was a different lecturer for every lecture, and they did not provide office hours that UWEC professors do. So even though the two Universities are teaching the same material, the way that they present, and examine the material is very different. Also because it was a bigger university, the class sizes were much larger. Most of my classes had between 200-500 students in them, where at UWEC most of my classes have around 40 students. Education is a critical component of life, so it was very interesting to see the differences when studying in a different country.

Another big difference in institutions in Scotland is health care. Most health care clinics are free, and so are any prescriptions that the doctor prescribes for you. This is very different from the United States, in that most people need health insurance to be able to afford to go to the doctor and to receive medication. But because of this free health care, doctors are more hesitant about giving out medications of antibiotics to ensure that people don't over use these kinds of medications. So even though both countries have health care, how they make it available to the public is very different.

Because Scotland and the United States have a positive relationship, all of the people in Scotland were very welcoming and friendly towards United States students. By joining different clubs and activities through the University, I was able to meet quite a few Scottish students. All of them were very welcoming, and wanted to hear more about my culture to compare to their own. We loved discussing how things were different, and would often criticize each other's accents. One thing that I found very interesting was how knowledgeable many of the Scottish people were on the United States politics. I over heard many debates from the Scottish on the United States upcoming presidential elections, and whom they thought was the right choice for the presidential candidate. This shocked me because as a student from the United States, I didn't know anything about Scottish politics until I researched when I started to study there. So because we have such a strong, positive relationship between Scotland and the United States, they are very open and welcoming to United States students.

Being that I lived in a dorm with all international students, I was able to experience different cultures from all around the world. In my flat I had students from Brazil, China, France, Sweden, and the US. It was very interesting to see how different people from different cultures acted in a home setting. Even though we were all students coming for an education, we all ate different food at different times, dressed in different kinds of cloths, and had different time schedules. One major difference that I noticed was that there were two Chinese students in my flat that did everything together. The man would cook all of the food, clean all of the plates, and do the cleaning of the flat. This is very different from the United States culture, in that these types of chores tend to be more female dominated. Another big difference that I noticed was that the people from Brazil, France, and China, would often make bigger meals that they could freeze and save for later, while the students from the U.S. often made easier kinds of foods to prepare such as pasta or eggs each night. This was one of the biggest shocks to me that things such as the food we ate on a daily basis could be so different for students that live in different cultures.

Even though people in Scotland speak English, they have a very different accent than we have in the United States. Specifically in Glasgow, they are known for having the “glaswegian accent” which is a particularly thick Scottish accent. When I first got off the plane and on the bus to my dorm, a fellow Scottish student began to talk to me. I remember sitting there, knowing that he was talking, but not understanding a word he was saying. I felt bad but I had to keep asking him to repeat himself. This was quite challenging at first, making communicating to others difficult. But over time

after hearing with the accent everyday you begin to understand the accent (and even begin having one yourself) and communicating became much easier.

Study abroad not only allowed me to learn about different cultures, but it allowed me to learn more about myself. With being in a different country, I didn't have a working phone to make a phone call, or send a text whenever I wanted to people back home. This allowed me to become a more independent person, and helped me realize who I am. It showed me that there is a world outside of Wisconsin, the state in which I was born and raised, and that it is truly an incredible place to be. But what it has truly taught me is to be open-minded. That people come from different cultures, different places, and have different experiences. This means that we have different thoughts, feelings, and actions all of which are correct. Studying in Glasgow taught me to be independent, that I don't always need to completely rely on others, and that I can truly do whatever I set my mind to. I honestly cannot put into words how thankful I am for this incredible opportunity, it truly taught me more than a book ever could!