Ian’s Major: Biological Systems Engineering

Program: Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais Exchange, Fall

Academic Life: I study biological systems engineering with an emphasis on food processing. This exact major did not exist at UFMG, but I was able to take classes for my major through the mechanical engineering and pharmacy departments. The classes were laid-back and both the students and professors were very welcoming to me as the only American student in the class. My classes served as one of the main ways I met Brazilians. A couple of my classes involved a lot of group work, which made getting to know people very easy. A couple of the professors I had did their PhD in the United States and were willing to explain things in English when I needed it.

Internship Experience: I worked as an intern teaching English in an extension program at UFMG for about 4 hours per week. Since it was part of the extension program, there was a wide range of students in the class, and besides one high-school student, I was the youngest one in the room. The students already spoke quite a bit of English, and my job was to improve their conversational skills and smooth out the rough edges with their grammar. I had fun, grew, met people and even made some money.

Advice for Someone Considering Belo: I would encourage whomever decides to participate in this program to get to know and become comfortable in the city as early in your stay as possible. Belo Horizonte is much larger than Madison and the university is fairly far from the center. I enjoyed my stay much more once I was comfortable going anywhere. Given the larger size of the city, there is always something going on; you just have to get there. Get to know the bus system!

“There’s so much to take in and so many wonderful people.”