Hazel’s Majors: Chinese, Biochemistry

Program: UW Intensive Chinese Language, Summer

Academic Life: Classes involved two forty-minute lecture periods followed by two periods of discussion. I took second year Mandarin, but there were also a range of other classes such as business and linguistics. We had class Monday through Thursday and were expected to meet five hours a week with a tutor who spoke fluent Mandarin. This was very helpful when it came to homework and reviewing for exams. My favorite thing to do was tell her about my life in the US and she would tell me about life in China, both of us speaking in Mandarin, of course. Friday consisted of a weekly exam, which was then followed by language table which involved gorging ourselves on local cuisine while speaking Chinese with classmates and instructors. The other students were mostly also from UW Madison.

On Living in China: Upon my arrival in China, I was both nervous and exited. The first night, walking to the grocery store to buy basic supplies involved new surroundings and an inability to communicate with the locals because of the language barrier. However, the more time I spent in China, the easier it was for me to find my way around any given location. I was afraid at first to travel anywhere. My first trip to Beijing was with seventeen other people and the last time I went to Beijing I traveled with only my roommate. Once I realized just how far I had come from that scared dependent person on that first trip to Beijing, I knew that I could spend my life in China.

Advice for Someone Considering this Program: I was scared to be away from home and my family so long when first considering the trip. But I knew this was a once in a lifetime adventure that I could not pass up. My language skills have improved far more than I thought possible. The people I met on this trip have become friends that I will forever be acquainted with. It is worth every minute and I would do it again in a heartbeat.