Maggie Butzen

Maggie’s Major: Geological Engineering, Geology, Japanese

Program: Sophia University Exchange, Academic Year

Most Memorable Experience: I joined the girls’ basketball team at my university in Japan, through which I was able to participate in the annual sports festival which had been held for over 50 years. This time I was attending an event not as an exchange student, but as a member of the university. The traditional opening and closing ceremonies were different from anything I had expected and having the opportunity to participate in this event was amazing. With the Japanese students and fellow athletes cheering for me as we played, I felt truly accepted.

Academic Life: I was enrolled as an exchange student in FLA, the Faculty of Liberal Arts. I was able to take classes in literature, history and linguistics taught in English by professors from various countries alongside Japanese students as well as fellow exchange students. The Japanese language course was challenging and with the help of the excellent teachers I was able to improve my Japanese at a rate I never thought possible. Taking classes with fellow exchange students from across the globe was an amazing opportunity that allowed me not only to learn about Japanese culture and customs, but to explore many different countries all in one classroom.

First Impressions: When I arrived in Japan, I was overwhelmed with the sheer size and activity in Tokyo. Madison is the largest city I’ve ever lived in, so exploring Tokyo, a city with a population of about 13 million, was an adventure. The streets were always busy, the sidewalks crowded, it took me a week to wrap my head around all that Tokyo had to offer, and even though I lived there for a year I know there are still many areas left to discover.

“My self confidence increased exponentially as I succeeded day after day, living in a foreign country.”