PROGRAM: ACTR Flagship Program, Academic Year

LEAH’S MAJORS: Neurobiology, Russian Language & Civilization

ACADEMIC LIFE: The academic work for the program was quite rigorous. Students were split into groups of four or five for classes on advanced Russian grammar, phonetics, speaking, writing, reading, and media literacy. All participants were together for weekly Russian culture and literature classes. In the fall, students also took classes with local students in their field of study; I chose human biochemistry. Each day after group classes, we had individual tutoring, which was perhaps the single most important factor in my language growth.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES: The program, and life in Kazakhstan, was really difficult at times. The experience has without a doubt changed me. I think I am now a more tolerant and open-minded person.

ADVICE FOR SOMEONE CONSIDERING KAZAKHSTAN: If you are serious about your Russian proficiency, this is the program for you. It is hard work, but immensely rewarding. Adjusting to life in Kazakhstan can be difficult when you have spent your undergraduate career studying Russian culture through the domestic Flagship program. It is important not to try looking for Russia while on the program. Appreciate Kazakhstan for what it is, be curious, and embrace the opportunity to learn about a new culture.

STUDYING A LANGUAGE ABROAD: It would not be possible for me to achieve such a high Russian proficiency without spending time abroad. Russian is a widespread language, and I now have a better understanding of the role of the language in the greater Russian-speaking world.

“IT’S THE FULL IMMERSION IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE HOST COUNTRY THAT REALLY STICKS WITH YOU AND ALTERS YOUR WORLD PERSPECTIVE.”