Natalie’s Major: Anthropology

Program: UMN MSID International Development in Kenya, Fall

Academic Life: The classroom experience was unique on this program. Classes were small and limited to just students on the program. Students took most of the same classes with International Development, Kenya Country Analysis, and Research Methods taken by everyone. The Swahili class was split up by experience level and a track class was offered in which everyone could choose their area of interest. The track options are linked to the internship that follows the classroom portion; options are Education and Literacy, Entrepreneurship and Alternative Economies, Public Health, Social Service, and Sustainability and the Environment. The classes were taught by professors from the local Kenyatta, and Nairobi Universities. All very experienced in their fields and dedicated to giving students the most real and holistic picture of Kenya and development issues that they can.

Natalie’s Internship: I interned at two different microfinance organizations on the coast of Kenya in Mombasa. I was able to be involved in meeting with groups of loan recipients. I helped to write our receipts for payments, saw how issues within the group were dealt with, and learned about how individuals used loans and what their businesses were.

Study Abroad and Natalie’s Future Aspirations: I learned how to be very adaptable to a foreign environment, especially when in every city I traveled to the culture seemed to be entirely different! I also learned to get around a new city on my own, using my limited but ever increasing knowledge of the language. My internship also exposed me to working with a non-profit organization, everything from events they host to the day to day responsibilities. This will be especially important to me when looking for a job since I am specifically interested in working in the non-profit world.

“I have gained confidence and assertiveness because of my experience.”