Grant’s Major: Spanish
Program: WIP Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Academic Year

Academic Life: Academics at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid will differ quite a bit from what one might be used to in the States. The Reunidas classes are for Americans only, albeit still instructed in Spanish by a Spanish professor, whereas Complutense classes are the university’s classes with Spanish students and other exchange students. These classroom settings provided a decent deal of culture shock, as the amount of students in each class is much smaller than I was accustomed to at Wisconsin, and classes can last anywhere from 1.5 to 3 hours a lecture. The final grade depends mostly on the final exam and a final paper.

Most Memorable Moments: I decided to become a volunteer working with other students and some adults to walk the streets of Madrid and spend time with the homeless. Not only was seeing the darker side of the city interesting, but the friends I made among the volunteer group became pretty much my Spanish family and offered real, authentic insight into Spanish culture. I really recommend getting involved in an extracurricular because it’s the easiest way to meet people and continue to see them regularly! It’s amazing to come to the realization that a foreign country has become as comfortable as home!

Cultural Differences: In Spain, conversations are literally held face to face, and seated at tables, the chairs are centimeters apart. Upon returning, I’ve been told, in the most uncomfortable voice, multiple times, that I’ve sat myself “uncomfortably close” to my family and friends.

Advice for Someone Considering Madrid: Madrid is as Spanish as one can get, and although it may seem like a typical big city, it has so many cultural niches and quirks which will leave you surprised, amazed and confused, and without regretting a single thing except perhaps not having appreciated Madrid more while you were there.

“It may sound tricky, difficult, overwhelming, and it is! But the best thing to keep in mind is that this is the exact reason you wanted to study abroad—it’s challenging, different and new!”