

BADGERS BEYOND ABROAD

alumni interview series

Jenni Young

China

Life After Study Abroad

After my summer study abroad in Tianjin, I returned to China every year to work and continue learning the language. After I graduated from UW, I started a masters program in Chinese language and culture at the Ohio State University to attain an advanced level of Chinese language skills so that I could work as a professional in China. During that time I received a Chinese government fellowship to study at Beijing Normal University where I conducted research and took graduate level courses in psychology alongside Chinese masters and PhD students. I wrote my thesis Chinese-American Transnational Marriage: Cultural Differences and Marital Satisfaction completely in Chinese. It's probably the thing I am most proud of to this day. I have so much more respect for international students in America now!

After working for a year at a school for children with special needs in Beijing, I decided to go back to graduate school for a clinical degree in Couples and Family Therapy. Currently, I am a practicing bi-lingual (Mandarin and English) therapist in the D.C. area and I work with many Asian families that are struggling with acculturation issues as well as normal family problems. I'm close to finishing my PhD in Family Science and I hope to someday become a professor of Couples and Family Therapy either in the United States or abroad.

Impact on Life, Goals & Career

My study abroad experience had a huge impact on my life. First of all, most of my friends from college were people that I had met while studying abroad or working in the study abroad office. They have been an amazingly supportive network of people that I still stay in touch with today if I need general life advice, help with job searches, or travel recommendations.

Secondly, building on my Chinese language skills from the Tianjin study abroad program has opened so many doors professionally. I stuck with studying the language for over six years and it has really paid off. You won't find too many Chinese/English bi-lingual therapists around and there is a huge demand for this type of work.

Lastly, I learned the value of living in a place so different from your home. Studying abroad is challenging, and it pushes you to survive in an environment where you aren't comfortable. This has really motivated me to keep an open mind when interacting with people who are different from me. I came from a place of real privilege being an American studying in a foreign country and I work hard to reflect on that privilege and help people with fewer resources than myself when I can.

Advice for Returning Students

Congratulations. It's a real accomplishment to study abroad and to put yourself in a challenging and uncomfortable situation. You have learned so much from this experience about the world, other people, and about yourself. My advice is don't stop now, keep doing it! It doesn't necessarily have to be abroad, but keep pushing yourself to be uncomfortable, to learn new things, to have new experiences, and to meet new people.

Interview from October 2016



Jenni with her new British passport, still living the international life.

Never stop learning, and say "yes" to things that scare you. You will be a better, more well-rounded individual for doing so.

