Dawson’s Majors: Statistics, Spanish, Japanese

Program: UW Spanish Language in Costa Rica, Summer

Academic Life: For classes, I took the equivalents of Spanish 311, 325, and 224. The classes were 3-4 hours, 5 days a week. It was a really relaxed classroom where there was the teacher and at most 8 students. The instruction is very one-on-one if you are the only student and very close to one-on-one with very few students. The students were all UW-Madison students because the classes were designed specifically for Madison students. The teachers were local teachers hired by the institute. My biggest suggestion about the academics here is don’t worry about the grades; the expectations are clear.

Cultural Differences: I think the biggest cultural difference between the US and Costa Rica was that people were a lot more helpful if you didn’t know certain words in Spanish. In the US it’d be rare to find someone who knows enough Spanish to translate a word for someone who doesn’t speak English perfectly. In Costa Rica there were a lot of people very knowledgeable in English to translate a word into Spanish.

How Study Abroad Changed Dawson: Study abroad has changed me by being much more fluent in Spanish and being a lot more confident going around a city and knowing what I’m doing in places I’m not familiar with. Now I feel I could travel anywhere.

“My tip to anyone considering studying abroad in general is to not be afraid of the unknown or to try new things.”