

**Liberal Arts and Science/ USA/ August 15th 2018 – May 15th 2019/ University of Wisconsin-Madison/
USA-2018-43HOH-f**

Looking back at my year at the University of Wisconsin-Madison I can confidently say that it was a very successful year both from a personal and academic perspective. UW-Madison is one of the top public universities in the United States and this was one of the primary reasons why I chose to study abroad at this institution. Moreover, UW-Madison has a very high research activity and I hoped that studying there for a year would bring me to the hub where innovations are created and where ideas are discussed. My hopes and expectations were fulfilled. Firstly, I was thrilled by the course selection at the university. Thanks to my study program in Germany (Liberal Arts and Sciences), I had a lot of freedom and flexibility to choose courses that I was interested in, without worrying about their recognition at my German university. I therefore primarily enrolled in courses that I was interested in and that I found important for my academic and professional development. Usually, students can enroll in more courses and use the first two weeks at the beginning of a semester to explore and decide whether they would want to commit to attending the course throughout the semester. I too used this opportunity which certainly helped me to attend the courses that I found the most interesting and challenging. On the other side, what made it so valuable to attend the courses at UW-Madison were the professors that taught them. Being a big research institution, UW-Madison has professors and instructors that are directly involved in research and creation of knowledge and ideas that one explores during classes. Knowing this gave me a great amount of faith and assurance which in turn motivated me even more to fully engage in discussions with professors and other students. As a result, I learned a lot and perhaps most importantly I improved my analytical thinking skills that have certainly proved to be a valuable asset in every setting. This successful academic experience also reflects on my personal and professional development. By attending a number of different courses, I got a step closer to understanding what I want to do in life and how I want my professional goals to unfold. Of particular importance was a course

on Green Urbanism that explored sustainable urban development, but that also gave me an opportunity to get involved in a 100% Renewable Plan project that the city of Madison adopted as its development agenda. I worked on this project as a student researcher, together with my course professor and other students, and got an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a field where I possibly see myself working in the future. Following a similar direction, I am currently doing an internship and working on a Green City Action Plan for the city of Sarajevo, B&H, and there is no doubt that my experience from Madison helped me to get the internship in the first place and be able to successfully contribute to the project with my knowledge and experience that I have gained during a year at UW-Madison.

What proved to be the most difficult during my year at UW-Madison was, surprisingly, navigating through a typical American college life. In my experience and perception, most American students are younger and less mature than in Germany, at least in the first two years of their higher education. Moreover, they have lifestyles, worldviews and values that I personally struggled to accept. This made it very hard for me to socialize and meet people that I can relate to, even though I consider myself a very social person. It therefore took me at least a couple of months until I had found a group of friends with whom I could engage in activities that I found enjoyable. On the other side, these social experiences brought me closer to understanding the American culture and I was able to situate it into a wider global picture. It might sound foolish, but I often say that a year of living in the United States brought me closer to understanding the world a bit more, referring mostly to capitalism, consumption, systemic racism, environmental degradation, poverty, inequality, etc. that permeate Western societies and rule the world.

Yet, regardless of the challenges that I had to overcome, the year at UW-Madison will be remembered as an important life experience and I am very grateful for this opportunity.