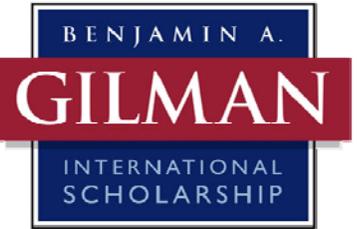


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For engineering majors, study abroad opportunities are hard to come by and study in China is almost unheard of. So when I got the chance to travel there for a year of language study, I hoped to go beyond my goal of language proficiency and find a way to connect my experience with my scientific background. The Gilman International Scholarship ended up giving me the chance to not only

gain fluency in Mandarin, but to gain cultural immersion and learn about science in China both in a historical context and a laboratory setting.

My study abroad program was officially an academic year of intensive Chinese language study at Peking University in Beijing, China. Once I settled in to my routine of daily language classes, I set off to look around nanomaterials labs both at Peking and neighboring Tsinghua University, before choosing one to carry out a small research project and gain truly unique undergraduate research experience. When my academic program concluded, I stayed on through my summer vacation, learning about China's laboratory and research cultures, as well as lots of technical vocabulary relating to my field of work. Living arrangements varied throughout my year there, as I went from living in dorms on campus in the fall, to a homestay in the spring, and then a student apartment shared with seven other Chinese students in the summer; each one bringing their own comforts and

inconveniences, but all of them bringing lasting friendships with people now all over the world.

"The Gilman International Scholarship ended up giving me the chance to not only gain fluency in Chinese, but to gain cultural immersion and learn about science in China both in a historical context and a laboratory setting.."

Outside of academics, I took Tai'chi classes. One place I made a particular point of visiting as part of my personal science enrichment, was the Dujiangyan irrigation system in Sichuan. The system is a testament to the engineering prowess of ancient China, as it was built more than 2,000 years ago to deal with flooding, cut through a mountainside before the invention of explosives, and is still in use today. Finally, before leaving China, I visited the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai. I had a taste not only of China, but of the rest of the world as well.

FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

For my Follow-on Service Project, I decided to dedicate my efforts to promoting study abroad amongst science and engineering majors, by giving presentations of my experience in China to several

audiences. I also became involved with my school's study abroad office, helping persuade engineering students that study abroad was feasible and worth the effort to plan for. I visited local

high schools for their "International Week," taking the lead in introducing them to life and culture of China.