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2019 Wisconsin Study in Poland Scholarship Report

My experience this summer as a student in Jagiellonian University's School of Polish Language and Culture has been a completely unforgettable experience. In my six weeks of study I accomplished many personal goals, including academic, social, and cultural. I also learned and gained experience. Overall, I have achieved a new outlook on life because of this amazing program.

My average day during the program was one that was completely different than my student life at home. I would wake at 6:45am each day, prepare myself for the day, and eat breakfast around 7:45. I would leave Piast around 8:20 and take the bus and tram to make it to class by 9. Class would end at 1pm and I regularly grabbed lunch at a coffee shop with friends or family. By the end of the program, Nakielny had become my favorite. For the first half of the program I would attend the History of Poland class until 4:30 before heading back to Piast, and the second half consisted of riding the bus back to Piast after lunch. My evenings would vary between studying, spending time with new friends, and enjoying the activities offered by the program. Compared to my schedule at home, it was very stable. I was used to having a completely different schedule every day. The constant stability of this program's schedule was a pleasant change that helped me adjust to the changes going on around me.

When I looked closely, I noticed a lot of subtle differences between Polish and American life. My friends often were often the ones to point these differences out. Travel was the difference that affected me every day. In the United States, public transportation is uncommon in most places, and cities where it is located have mediocre systems at best. Kraków was a different story. I did not miss having easy access to cars whatsoever. The busses and trams were clean, ran

smoothly, and were mostly on time. The age of the vehicle did not matter; they were all in good condition. To compare, the busses in my college town are dirty, never on time, and there are not enough of them. While public transportation in Kraków can get crowded, it is still functional. It is a way to get cars off the road and people to their destination in a decent amount of time. The increased quality of public transportation was a pleasant change in living that I mourned the loss of when I arrived home.

I began this six-week program with one goal in mind—to improve my Polish so I can talk with my Babcia and am prepared for class in the fall. I knew my Polish skills were not where I wanted them to be, as I had a professor who did not teach well the past semester. I was placed in the A2 level. Within the first week I realized it would be an uphill battle. My professor said she wanted my class to be prepared for A2, but I was not. I could understand the grammar, but my vocabulary and comprehension were nonexistent. It was an uphill battle for those six weeks. I am proud to say that my goal was met. I may have been the worst in the class, but my teachers supported me throughout the program. By the end, my comprehension in speaking and reading had improved the most. While they still are weak, my vocabulary and speaking skills showed great improvement. Grammar and spelling improved at a steady but insignificant pace. I worked hard and it paid off. I received a C+ in the course; it is the proudest I have ever been about that grade.

I am extremely grateful and thankful that this opportunity was given to me. It has made me grow in my Polish skills more than I could have ever hoped for. I also had the opportunity to live a different lifestyle and make new friends, both of which I will do my hardest to keep with me in the United States. I would not have had a more enjoyable and satisfying summer anywhere else.