The Occupational Therapy Program at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse has provided the students admitted to the program a wonderful opportunity to explore the profession on an international level. With little time to take elective courses outside the program, students have the option to expand their learning overseas by taking a semester elective course and study abroad opportunity. The international course includes a semester of discussion with students at Robert Gordon University (RGU) of Aberdeen, Scotland and University of Brighton of England through video conferencing. The discussions throughout the semester revolve around the similarities and differences between the countries’ healthcare systems, the profession, and general culture.

In addition to contacting students at RGU and Brighton, we also had the opportunity to host several occupational therapy students from these two schools. During their visit, we were fortunate enough to continue the discussions started via video conferencing in person during our classes and during our leisure time. Our discussions provided me with new insights that I have since incorporated into my learning experience and education. Having these guests in La Crosse has sparked my interest in visiting their home countries to see firsthand what the profession is like in another country. During my traveling experience, I hope to learn about the occupational therapy process in the U.K., the major areas of practice, the treatment options provided, and the influence of the healthcare system on the profession.

This particular experience will impact the way I view the profession here in the United States. During the rest of my time in the program, my fieldwork experiences, and my transition to the professional world, I will utilize what I experience in the U.K. to improve the care I provide. The experience will provide me with another way to think about how to approach and treat each client I meet.

Additionally, I will share my experiences with my classmates and co-workers to expand their view of the profession here in the United States. When I return from this study abroad experience, I plan give a presentation to the first-year occupational therapy students currently enrolled in the international class. The presentation will include what it is like to live in Scotland or England, my experiences shadowing an occupational therapist, the major areas of practice for occupational therapists in the U.K. as well as cultural and healthcare differences between the countries. I will include pictures and mementos obtained during my trip. This presentation will supplement the video conferencing done in the international course as well as provide those considering traveling with more information about the experience. I hope to spark an interest in those questioning whether or not to travel.

Receiving this scholarship will provide me with some financial assistance to travel to the U.K. by supplementing the money I have been saving to participate in this study abroad experience. With this financial assistance, I can participate fully in the experience and return to share what I have learned with my fellow classmates. This experience will enhance my perspective about the profession and give me the opportunity to pass on what I learn to the first-year occupational therapy students. This award will give me that opportunity.