

Ramapo student's experience in Taiwan will enrich her career goals in international business

Ramapo College student Michelle Ta '23 received a [Critical Language Scholarship](#) (CLS) to study Mandarin Chinese at National Cheng Kung University (NCKU), in Tainan, Taiwan. Michelle, a Paramus, N.J., native majoring in International Business, was the first Ramapo student to receive the prestigious award.

Michelle recently arrived back home after spending the summer in Taiwan and was happy to share her experience.

Please tell us about your trip.

No doubt, it was the best experience of my life. I was able to meet so many amazing and inspiring people, as well as learn many new skills that I never imagined possible in such a short amount of time. Although the program is definitely more intense than any of us could have prepared for, my classmates agreed that we definitely learned more than one year of Mandarin in the span of two months. We also got the opportunity to explore the language and culture first hand rather than learning from a textbook.

Why did you choose to study Mandarin?

I started studying Mandarin when we had to stay home during the height of the pandemic. I just studied for fun with no language goals in mind until I found out about CLS. I applied for the scholarship because I wanted to have an immersion experience with Mandarin. After my experience in Taiwan, I became very inspired and motivated to take Mandarin more seriously and perhaps integrate it more into my studies.

How will your experience in Taiwan benefit your studies in International Business?

My experience in Taiwan was very eye-opening in that I was able to communicate with people from a different part of the world. Although we can be very different, some of their ideas and values are similar to ours. It helped me realize that a lot of business practices that I learned from textbooks are now being applied to real world situations, and vice versa. After coming home, I can definitely relate and

have a clearer understanding of class materials. My experience in Taiwan also allowed me to see how international business is done through the eyes of Taiwanese people. This knowledge will be beneficial if I get an opportunity to work in Taiwan in the future.

What are your career plans after graduation in spring 2023?

For now, I will continue working for a logistics company, but I am open to other international work or study opportunities, specifically in Taiwan, because I would love to go back and learn more about the people and culture.

What advice can you give other students who wish to pursue this line of study?

For other International Business students, studying abroad will definitely help with self-discovery and also expand your view on business practices around the world. So, whether it is only for one month or for a whole semester, definitely take the opportunity to study abroad because there is so much you can learn being immersed in a completely different environment that you won't be able to find in any textbooks.

Each summer, CLS provides rigorous academic instruction in fifteen languages that are critical to U.S. national security and economic prosperity, said Dean Chen, Chair/Convener of the Department of Political Science in the School of Humanities and Global Studies at Ramapo College and the Director of the [Office of Prestigious Fellowships and Scholarships](#). “CLS participants are citizen ambassadors, sharing U.S. values and promoting U.S. influence abroad. We are so proud of and happy for Michelle for receiving this great award and recognition.”

The [CLS Program](#) of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is a study abroad opportunity for U.S. college and university students to learn languages essential to U.S. engagement with the world. Student participants are expected to continue their language study beyond the scholarship period, and later apply their critical language skills in their future professional careers.