

My Year in Seoul

I began studying the Korean language in January 2016 with the University of Montana's Project GO program. At the time, I had no idea that a weekly 5-hour, online course would lead me to living in Seoul, South Korea for an entire academic year. I completed the Project GO online course and continued on to participate in the University of Montana's Study Abroad program at Sogang University in the summer of 2016.

Upon my return to the States, I became aware of the Boren Scholarship for critical language study through my university's National Scholarship Office. I made the decision to apply and was selected as a Boren Scholar in April 2017. I began my year in Seoul that June with the University of Montana's Project GO Study Abroad program at Yonsei University. When my fellow ROTC students returned to the US at the end of the summer, I stayed to begin my year as an exchange student. I completed my exchange year in June 2018 and am now embarking on my last year at the University of Maryland. I hope to commission in May 2019 as an officer in the US Navy and be assigned to a ship homeported in Yokosuka, Japan.

My time abroad as a Project GO student and Boren Scholar have greatly shaped my undergraduate experience. Going from no proficiency to my current limited working proficiency in the span of two and a half years has been quite the journey. I am grateful to all of my language teachers during that time for their dedication and passion in not just teaching me the Korean language but also showing me the beauty of Korean culture. I have only begun to scratch the surface but am committed to learning more about the Korean language and culture in the future.

I will always consider the city of Seoul as a second home because of the beautiful memories I made there and all of the people I was able to meet. My time in Korea also solidified the peninsula's importance in my mind as a key pillar of American foreign policy in East Asia. I intend to pursue graduate education in International Relations and return to Korea during my time in the Naval service as a Foreign Area Officer or liaison between our two countries' military forces. I am thankful for the opportunity to play my small role in maintaining the strong diplomatic and military relationship between the United States and Republic of Korea as an ROTC student and Boren Scholar.