

Studying at Bethel College 2022/23 – Karen Ramos

I spent my winter and summer semesters of 2022/23 at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, USA. I have had an unthinkable number of unforgettable experiences that will shape me in my future life, which I hereby try to describe and summarize. However, most of the experiences are the one that needs to be experienced and lived, which is why I can only say: Apply! It is worth it!

Arrival and settling in

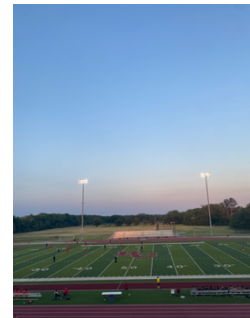


BC Administration Building

Never in my life have I been away from my family for so long. I have traveled and visited many places in my life, but I have never really lived anywhere but home for a long time, additionally on another continent. Every beginning is hard, however, settling in at Bethel College was much easier than I expected.

I was given a guided tour of the campus and got to know many nice and helpful people right away, with whom I still maintain daily contact. The first few days were especially interesting because classes did not start until five days after my arrival. Therefore, I was able to get to know the small town of Newton better. In addition, I was able to buy everything I needed at the time in terms of utensils for myself - Target and Walmart are perfect for this. In addition, Bethel College offered so-called "Thresher Days", a possibility for freshman to find their way around campus better and faster.

To help me settle in legally, there were many faculty members who were responsible for lending a helping hand to the "internationals" so that the organization and arrival were not too overwhelming. I quickly settled into my new apartment, in the so-called "mods," a residential building where it was very busy and there was always something going on. There was a total of seven girls living in my apartment, all of whom I grew particularly fond of over the year.



BC-Football Field

Studying at Bethel College

I was able to select courses that attracted me personally, gave me an enrichment of information and abilities, and did not only assist my studies but also widened my own horizons because I had already passed several of my BUW courses. I took the course "Ceramics" specifically because it became my new passion, and as a result, I took it for two semesters instead of just one. Today, I own wonderful pottery that was even displayed in an exhibition where everyone was permitted to keep their own creations.



I had to enroll in at least 12 credit hours to be considered a full-time student, or roughly 3–4 courses, depending on how demanding the course is or what level of field it is in. My classes met 2-4 times per week, and each course had an average of 1-2 assignments per week. Almost all courses required attendance, and tardies were frequently noticed. The professors were incredibly supportive of me and my fellow students in all of our endeavors. Because of the small size of Bethel College and the low likelihood of being lost in the crowd,

interactions between instructors and students, there were tighter than I have ever seen in my whole academic career.

I was part of the cheer team for one semester, which fulfilled a childhood dream for me personally because this was always just a distant image from movies that shaped my childhood. I learned a lot about cheer, willpower, the importance athletes share with their team, and what a bond can be created. Through the cheer team, I was able to participate in many community service and social activities from Bethel College and Newton in general. Many times, we helped schools with activities, were present at town festivals, and represented Bethel College to the public, so being a cheerleader was also a great responsibility.

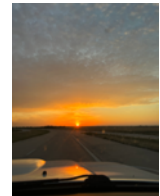


Everyday life, free time, and travel



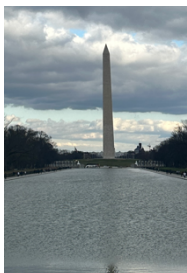
My everyday life and free time were mostly spent with my friends and the great people I met during my time in the US. Bethel College offered an incredible amount of free time activities: Bingo Nights, Trivia, Casino Nights, Late Night Breakfast, Seasonal activities (Halloween, Christmas, Spring, etc.), and much, much more. Bethel College even offered various galas or opportunities where we could dress up fancy. I would often go to various sporting events such as tennis, basketball, track, and various away games.

A little "Kansas passion" of mine was enjoying the just-perfect Kansas sunsets, as the vastness of the state offers unparalleled sunrises and sunsets, which were among my favorite Kansas features.



I used a lot of my time to explore the country where I lived for nine months. I loved experiencing the culture on campus and diving deeper into American college life, however, I also wanted to explore the countryside and the different states. There were vacations (Fallbreak, Thanksgiving Break, Winterbreak, and Springbreak) and vacations (e.g. Labor Day or MLK Day), which usually allowed for a long weekend.

In total, I visited 13 of the 50 states in the USA. Through the right airlines, it was often possible for me to get cheap flights. For example, I flew to Fort Lauderdale via Fallbreak at a bargain price and explored Miami over the week off. Winter break offered much more leeway to travel, as I had a total of just under 3.5 weeks that I traveled throughout the United States. Most use this time to fly home to their loved ones, however, I wanted to take full advantage of my USA time and used the time to travel.



But I didn't just travel alone. With newfound friends, I took many trips around the Midwest, which always turned out to be incredibly enriching. I learned a lot about my friends, family traditions, and the history of each person.

I spent Fallbreak with one of my roommates at her home in Kansas City. So I learned more about football, especially because the Kansas City Chiefs won the Superbowl for the second year in a row.

With two internationals, I took a day trip to Kansas University and watched an American football game, and explored Lawrence, Kansas.



*Monument Rocks,
KS*

Or I went to Wamego, Kansas, where I learned more about the story of the Wizard of Oz which originally started in Kansas.

Another time I traveled with a friend to the so-called Monument Rocks, which were about 4 hours west of Bethel College by car and are a breathtaking natural spectacle and a perfect representation of how beautiful the Midwest can be.

By becoming more familiar with Mennonites as a Christian and becoming more involved in the church, I made many contacts in that direction as well. So, I was able to be part of Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, a three-day camp near Colorado Springs offered in January and February for middle school and high school students. Our role here was to volunteer to offer a helping hand wherever it was needed.



Conclusion

I was able to expand my horizons and develop personally throughout my study year at Bethel College in addition to learning about a culture that was entirely foreign to me. I developed the ability to manage my feelings of homesickness and wanderlust as well as my sensations of loneliness and strangeness. I got to know a ton of fascinating individuals from fascinating backgrounds, and their experiences helped to mold me into the person I am today. Since my time, all of my acquired experiences, and my most treasured memories at Bethel College are things that no one can take away from me, I established new beliefs, values, and viewpoints that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. Without BUW's support, I would have been denied this unique experience and I am forever grateful for this opportunity BUW has given me.