



U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
Critical Language Scholarship Program



**PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: 10/5/2017

Contact: ECA Press

Telephone: 202-632-6452

**The University of Alabama Student Spends Summer in China with U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship Program**

The University of Alabama student Erin Behland spent the summer studying Chinese in Dalian, China as an awardee of the 2017 U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship.

For eight weeks, Behland and 26 other American students from institutions across the United States participated in intensive Chinese courses at Dalian University of Technology (DUT) in Dalian, China, a major city and seaport in Northeast China that is known for its mild summers and fresh seafood, as well as the designation as one of China's most livable cities many years in a row.

Behland and her fellow CLS program participants lived with local Chinese-speaking host families and met regularly with local peers to learn more about the Chinese language and develop their personal networks. The group engaged in cultural excursions, lectures and other enrichment activities designed to support and enhance language learning and exposure to the host culture.

During one excursion this summer, CLS students had the opportunity to visit Mt. Tai, considered the most sacred mountain in China, and Qufu, the hometown of Confucius. Students had the opportunity to use their Chinese language skills to converse with domestic Chinese tourists and local residents about the historical and cultural importance of Mt. Tai and Qufu.



*Students visit Qufu, the hometown of Confucius, in Shandong Province.*

With over 900 million native speakers and over a billion speakers in total, Chinese continues to be one of the most in-demand languages among employers in both the public and private sectors due to its relevance in the global marketplace.

The CLS Program runs every summer and is open to American students at colleges and universities. Applications for the 2018 CLS program are available at <http://www.clscholarship.org>. Applications are due November 15, 2017.

### **What is the CLS Program?**

The CLS program is part of a U.S. government effort to expand the number of Americans studying and mastering critical foreign languages. **CLS scholars gain critical language and cultural skills in languages that are less commonly taught in U.S. schools, but are essential for America's engagement with the world**, contributing to U.S. economic competitiveness and national security.

In 2017, 555 American students representing 217 colleges and universities across the United States were competitively selected from over 5,000 applicants to receive a CLS award. Each CLS scholar spends eight to ten weeks in one of 22 locations studying Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, or Urdu.

The program provides funded, group-based intensive language instruction and structured cultural enrichment experiences designed to promote rapid language gains. CLS scholars serve as citizen ambassadors, representing the diversity of the United States abroad and building lasting relationships with people in their host countries. They are expected to continue their language study beyond the scholarship and apply their critical language skills in their future careers.

For further information about the Critical Language Scholarship or other exchange programs offered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, please contact [ECA-Press@state.gov](mailto:ECA-Press@state.gov) and visit our websites at <http://www.clscholarship.org/> and <https://studyabroad.state.gov/>.