

S = Shelby

N = Ni Luh Putu Bunga Mastari Dewi ("Bunga")

S - Can you start by telling me your name?

N - Ni Luh Putu Bunga Mastari Dewi.

S - And where are you from?

N - Bali, Indonesia.

S - So tell me why you chose to come to NIU through the Fulbright scholarship.

N - Well NIU wasn't actually my first choice, but I am really glad that I have ended up here.

S - What was your first choice?

N - I liked a lot of the Ivy league schools on the East coast like Harvard.

S - Ah, I see. But now you don't mind that you were put into the Midwest?

N - No not at all, I like to see all of the seasons and I like how close campus is to everything.

S - For sure, I understand that. So tell me then, what do you do here as a Fulbright?

N - I am an FLTA (Foreign Language Teaching Assistant) and I also am a student.

S - What classes do you TA for?

N - Indonesian language classes.

S - Are those classes for beginners or people who are more advanced?

N - Well, the first semester I TA'd for the advanced sections, and now this semester (referring to second semester) I am TA-ing for the beginner levels.

S - Okay, interesting. Very cool. So now I am going to transition a bit and ask you about your opinions and experiences on the food here in DeKalb and at NIU.

N - Okay, sure.

S - Okay, so is this your first time in the US?

N - Yes it is.

S - Okay, so what have your thoughts been on the food here? How is it different from the food you are used to in Indonesia?

N - Well, the first semester I was really excited to try all of the American food. But then I found that most American food for me has been either too bland, too salty, too sweet, or too greasy.

S - Oh, okay...

N - Yeah, when we (referring to herself and the rest of the Fulbright students) got here we were all so excited to try the typical American foods.

S - Like what?

N - Like pizza...

S - Okay. And what about your experiences with the dining halls?

N - Well the dining halls have a lot of different choices of things to eat.

S - What do you like to eat at the dining halls, or what do you find yourself eating the most?

N - I really like the fruits - I eat them everyday.

S - Which fruits?

N - Like, oranges and grapes - there is always plenty to have everyday. Oh, and if I'm not at the dining halls I like to eat at Thai Pavilion here in DeKalb, or Pho and Grill.

S - Okay, and why those restaurants?

N - Well they're the closest kinds of foods to Asian food that I am used to.

S - I see. Okay, so I know this is very common among European and Asian, Southeast Asian students - do you prefer your water with or without ice?

N - Without ice (laughs). It already comes out of the machine or tap cold so there is no need for any extra ice.

S - Is there any foods or drinks that you have everyday?

N - Hot chocolate!

S - Really?

N - Yes, the hot chocolate in the dining halls is so good!

S - Awesome! Is hot chocolate something you can find in Bali?

N - Not really, I mean you could find it but no one really drinks it.

S - Okay, I see. So, with all of the foods that you have tried since you've been here in the US, have you found yourself ill at any point in time due to something you may have eaten?

N - Yes, I did end up getting sick and having to go the doctor. It was for stomach problems, gastrointestinal issues I think?

S - Right.

N - Lots of stomach pain. I think it was due to my schedule first semester - sometimes I would be so busy that I would miss eating at the dining halls so I would have to rely on instant noodles back in the dorm, and a lot of the time food just didn't agree with my stomach.

S - Sure, sure.

N - I'm glad that I tried all of the foods though. Now I know that I need to limit my fried foods and carbs - I've been sticking to a lot of good proteins and veggies instead now.

S - Are there any foods from back home that you are excited to eat when you return?

N - Yes, there is a dish in Indonesia which is salted fish cooked with tomato, onion, shallot, and chilies. Also, tempe which is soybean cake, tofu, and roasted pork.

S - Are you a coffee or tea drinker?

N - No coffee, but I do drink tea sometimes.

S - Do you have any recommendations for NIU or DeKalb in relation to the types of food they can offer to international students?

N - Over winter break, I traveled the US and went to LA to an Indonesian restaurant which was very authentic. I actually bought spices they had for sale and brought them back to DeKalb with me to use on the foods I eat here.

S - Oh great! I'm glad that you got to experience that.

N - Yes, it was really good. It is unfortunate that DeKalb doesn't have any Indonesian restaurants. But, my suggestion is that the dining halls could have a suggestion box that people can use to request different international dishes to be served. They would only have the international dishes like once a week, or for one week per semester, and they could still have traditional American choices for students, too. But this way, they could introduce a variety of non-American foods for all students to try.

S - I think that is a really interesting and unique suggestion! I think that could be a fun way to get students interested in other cultures and international cuisine.

N - Yes. And not all the dorms would have to do it either, maybe just one. Some dorms do lack choices compared to other dorms so it would be an interesting concept.

S - Great! Well thank you for your time and your help.

N - No problem, thank you.