

S = Shelby Holtz

I = Ildi Kurniawan

S – Can you tell me your name?

I – My name is Ildi Kurniawan.

S – And remind me where you're from?

I – I am from Indonesia, more specifically from Bengkulu, Sumatra.

S – Okay, great. Now I am just going to ask you a series of questions about what you do here at NIU and get your opinion on some things.

I – Okay.

S – So tell me why you chose to come to NIU through the Fulbright program.

I – As a Fulbright, I got a scholarship to come and teach here at NIU, Indonesian language. I proposed this university because I had never been to Illinois before –

S – So is this your first time in the US or no?

I – No, this is my second time. The first time was several years ago in Ohio for Fulbright scholarship.

S – Okay, cool. So go on, you've never been to Illinois before –

I – Right. So I thought that NIU would be a good choice. When you apply for Fulbright you get to rank different universities that you want to go to and then the office chooses for you based on what they think would be the best fit.

S – Okay, I see. I wasn't familiar with that. So you said you teach Indonesian language here, is that all levels, basic, intermediate, or?

I – I teach all levels, first semester I taught the basic level, and this semester [referring to second semester] I am teaching the advanced level.

S – Okay. Cool. So now I'm going to go ahead and move into some of the food questions and get your opinion on the food availability here at NIU and in DeKalb. So tell me, what are you eating, what would you like to be eating?

I – Well I do not eat pork because I am Muslim, so I have noticed there is a lot of pork options here on campus. So I just do my best to avoid those. I really like scrambled eggs and all of the fruit options available at the dining halls.

S – Oh really? What kinds of fruit?

I – Grapes, bananas, and apples. They're almost always available.

S – Okay. And is there anything that you eat or drink every day?

I – Hot water with lime and honey.

S – Oh really?

I – Yes, every day.

S – Okay. Have you experienced any illnesses from the foods that you've eaten here?

I – No, I have not experienced any illnesses, but I do take the time to read the ingredients lists on the foods I eat. I find it helpful so I can avoid eating excess sugar.

S – Oh, do you find that there is a lot of sugar in some of the foods you eat or would like to be eating?

I – Yes, so I just try not to eat them if I can. I know when I go back to Indonesia, I am going to need time to adapt to the foods there again because I have started to get used to the foods here. I do not want to get sick. So that is also what I have done here in DeKalb, I try to slowly adapt.

S – Do you do any cooking here?

I – Not as much as I'd like to.

S – Do you think you would cook more if you had access to familiar ingredients and a proper kitchen?

I – Sure. It is very hard to find proper ingredients here in DeKalb though.

S – Do you have any other suggestions for NIU or DeKalb as to what they could do to further help international students transition into American cuisine?

I – Well for me, I think having a halal table in some of the dining halls would be good for the Muslim student community. That way we can be sure that cooking utensils and pans have not touched pork. I think NIU tried to be accommodating of many international students. I think that they could investigate the backgrounds of some of the international students more to gain a better understanding of who is living in which dorm and what types of food are they used to.

S – Sure –

I – Maybe even have a special pantry on or near campus that has some more Asian staples like rice.

S – Absolutely, I think that's a great idea.

I – But overall I think it is just important to adapt. Find the similarities and differences in the availability of food. And I've otherwise really enjoyed my experience here at NIU.

S – Well good, I am so glad to hear that. Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me and for all of your help.

I – Sure, no problem.