Lindsey Schnell (Spring 2014 and Spring 2015 Buddy)

I would say that this experience has helped me grow exponentially! I have strengthened my communication and organization skills, having the weekly meetings with both the buddies and the program leader has really helped with that. I love working with international students because it broadens my perspective on the world, even if I am only comparing their origin to America, it still enables me to look at the world differently. This is crucial, especially at MSU where there are students from many countries who have come together to learn and share their experiences. These lessons have not only developed my global perspective, but they have also taught me professional skills such as responsibility. I am responsible for ensuring that my buddy has a better understanding of American life and culture at the end of the program as well as answering their questions to the best of my ability. This experience is delightful and fun and I thoroughly enjoy participating every semester! I gain friends as well as connections that appeal to my international interests. I hope this program is rewarding for others as it is for me.

Courtney Gough (Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 Buddy)

I feel as though the buddy program is definitely a rewarding, valuable experience. I was able to learn a lot about two different cultures that I did not know very much about before this year at all. It was a fun way to get to know people from other cultures and experience a little bit of what they have been through, through them. Just like last semester, it was very apparent to me that our culture has a way of closing people from other cultures out. My buddy would speak of how it was difficult for her to make friends and how some people just get frustrated with her when she would try to speak to them and she didn’t know a word. This is something that really frustrates me about our culture and needs to change. Having had one-on-one conversation with people who have experienced this makes me want to be sure to include culturally relevant lessons in my future classroom and try and make my students aware of these types of things in our society and hopefully share my experiences with them as means to help stop these things in our culture.

Olivia Hallac (Spring 2015)

I feel that through this program I have learned a significant amount about my Buddy’s country and culture. I think this experience has made a tremendous impact in my life. I have always been curious and interested in cultures outside my own but the chance to learn and interact with an authentic source is not always an easy thing. I do not know if I have learned much more about myself though—my Buddy pointed out some things about my body language. She noticed I talk with my hands, which is something I’m not consciously aware of doing but know I do it.
I would definitely say this experience has helped open my eyes to the potential perspectives international students can have. Though both my Buddy and myself are extremely busy students, it was never difficult to find time to meet. We would often be conversing and I wouldn’t realize a whole hour went by. I think opening up this portal of communication between two cultures was beneficial to both participants. I would say though I considered myself to be culturally sensitive before this experience, my awareness has increased.

Alexa Kirsh (Spring 2015)

Being a part of the Buddy Program is an experience that I will never forget. I have learned a lot more than I thought I initially was going to, and I became great friends with my buddy as well as other undergraduate buddies along the way. Despite that I already knew some bits about the South Korean culture—a culture my buddy is from—I found out that what I already knew was barely even the tip of the iceberg of what is really there.