

My experience at Károli Gáspár University has exceeded my greatest hope of what this semester would be

A group of students from Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA) spends the Autumn Semester at Károli every year. Four students from the current Calvin College exchange group share their experiences about studying at our university.

"When I am back in the United States, and people ask me about my time at Károli Gáspár, two things that may come to mind will be the engaging professors, and the "buddy" system. I've had good experiences with both, and I would go so far as to say that these have been defining features of my time at Károli Gáspár.

The professors have been highly engaging, and eager to help the students. I'm taking a Hungarian class (beginner level) and the professor begins each class by asking us if we have any questions; if we've seen anything we don't understand, or have heard something we need translated. It's been a good way to not only help us with the Hungarian, but also to help us acclimate to our time in Budapest.

When I and the other students on my program arrived in Budapest, we were assigned "buddies" by KRE. These "buddies" are Hungarian students at KRE who are able to help us out with various things we might struggle with, as well as show us around a little. We've had student buddies who have helped us with filling out our paperwork for our residency permits (which would have been *really* hard on our own), and who went with us to the immigration offices, to taking us out for tea and coffee, including to a tea house located in a basement of a building I had walked by several times, but would never have noticed had it not been for my buddy at KRE who took me there.

Budapest has been interesting. I've gotten to know my way around the city a little bit; I've come to know the public transportation here better than I know the public transportation in my own hometown in the US. But if friends and family back at home aren't that interested in the exact metro routes I took, I'll tell them about the experiences I had with engaging professors, and the Hungarian buddies."

Samuel Poortenga

"Studying at Károli Gáspár has been an amazing experience so far this semester. I had very little knowledge coming into this semester in Hungary what it would be like, but I knew it was going to be a fantastic learning experience.

It started with giving a try at the Hungarian language. My peers and I had a great opportunity to learn some beginner Hungarian through a two-week intensive course. It was, by far, the most difficult language I have ever tried learning, but I enjoyed the experience-based approach we took. Many times, after class I would have the opportunity to practice and apply some of the simple phrases we learned such as "Good morning" or "thank you." For one of our tests in the class, we had to go to a

market and order fruits and vegetables. It was so rewarding to be able to order something in a different language and actually be understood.

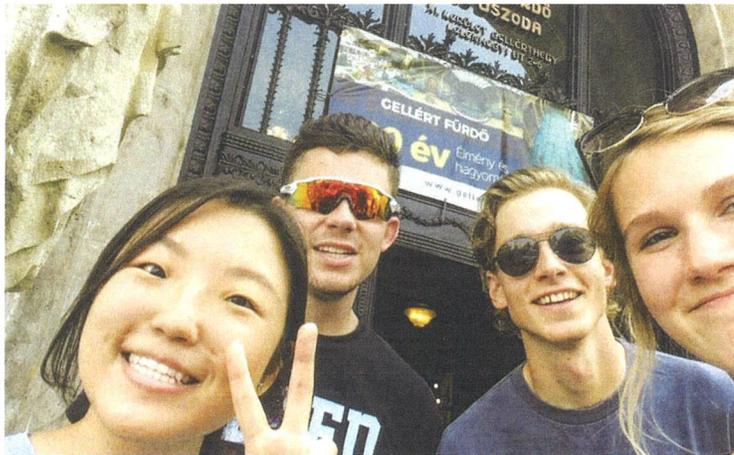
In general, all the classes I have been able to take at Károli Gáspár have been extremely rewarding. Relatively small class sizes have helped make space for good conversation, while unique and culturally significant subject matters like learning

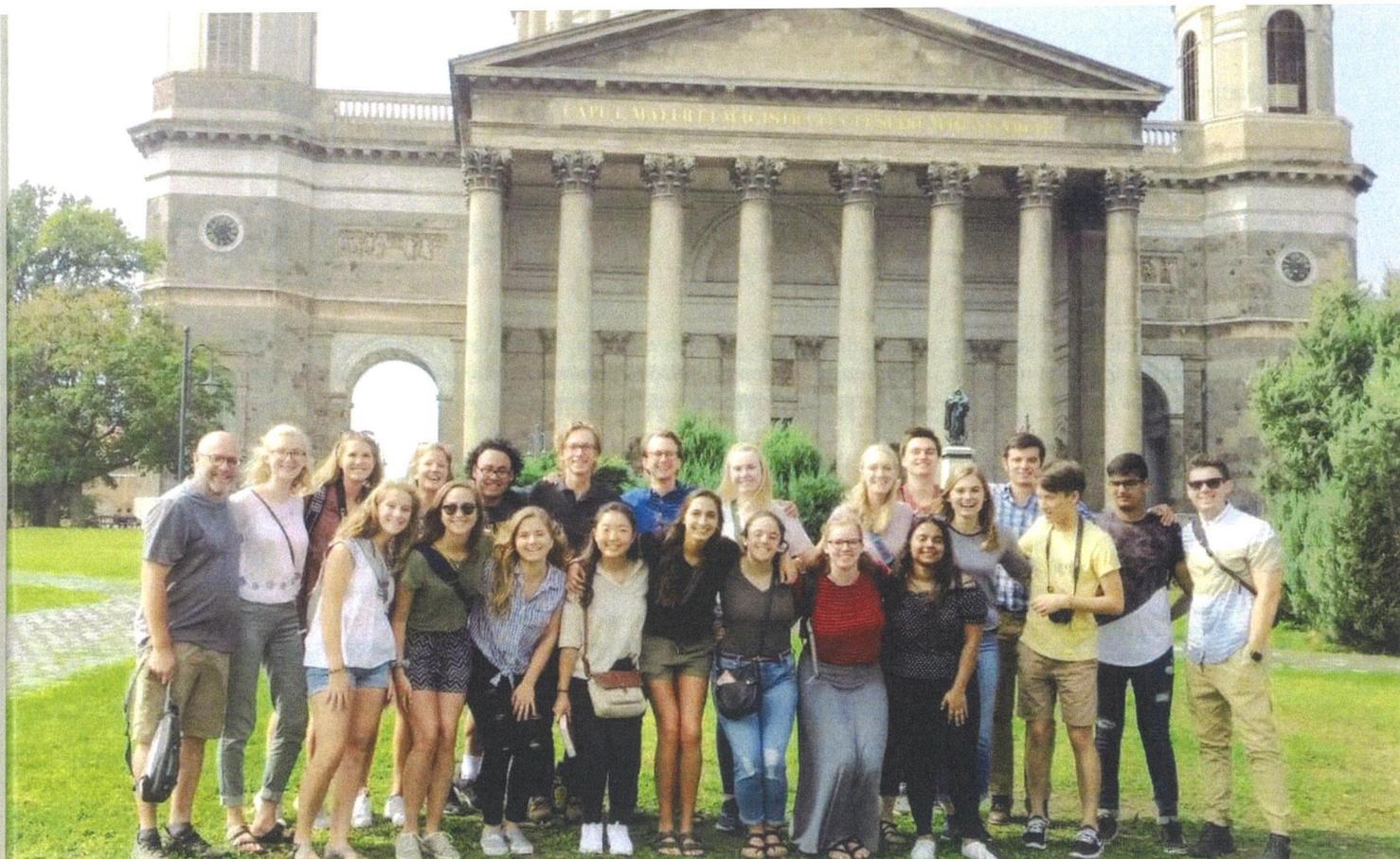
about the holocaust through literature have made my classes a meaningful and engaging experience.

As the semester has moved on, I have fallen in love with the location of my different classes at Károli Gáspár. Budapest has many wonderful places, but two of my classes are located right in the middle of downtown near Kálvin Square. This area is an amazing space to grab food before class, do homework, or just hang out at one of the many coffee shops. My peers and I have really enjoyed getting acquainted with the *city life*.

For anyone who is considering a semester abroad, I would whole-heartedly suggest going to Budapest and studying at Károli Gáspár University."

David van Dokkumburg





"Before coming to Hungary, I had no idea what to expect or how to prepare. Hungary was a country whose culture was foreign to me and I knew very little about this region of the world. However, when I saw the Danube River lit up late that night, I knew in an instant that I would love it here.

Károli Gáspár has done a great job of walking alongside my classmates and I from Calvin College as we learn to live and dwell in Budapest. They have calmed any nerves and have continued to make Budapest feel more like home. Károli Gáspár made sure to introduce my classmates and I to the city through the help of the buddy system. This accommodation was the most impactful and helpful tool that Károli provided us. Many of my classmates continue to keep in touch with their buddy. They go out to coffee with them or text them whenever they have questions. This system has helped my classmates and I feel supported and has been a great way to meet Hungarian students of our age.

I have also appreciated how much Károli has allowed and encouraged us to share our culture through different events and opportunities. One event that I cherished greatly was the international university presentations that took place during training week. It meant so much for us to share a part of our home with others. *I believe that understanding other cultures is important because it helps to widen perspectives and break stereotypes. So, it meant a lot that Károli wanted to better understand our home university and culture.*

Overall, I have really enjoyed studying abroad at Károli Gáspár. It has been a great experience getting to know Hungarian students and being taught by such passionate professors. Károli has helped to enhance my experience living in Budapest."

Elise Ryskamp

"I decided to study at Károli Gáspár University because so many professors and students at Calvin spoke so highly of it. Some even dared to say it was the best program offered at Calvin College. Thus far, my experience at Károli Gáspár has exceeded my greatest hope of what this semester would be.

One thing I love about Calvin College is the intriguing, engaging classes; and I was pleasantly surprised to find a class that was equally as exceptional as a Calvin class at Károli Gáspár. My class calls us to read our texts carefully, respond thoughtfully, and take part in lively discussions.

Károli Gáspár also set each of us up with a buddy to help us with registering for classes, finding where things are, getting us through the residency permit process, navigating the school and Budapest, and helping us with anything we could possibly need. They are like our Hungarian guardian angels. Not only this, they are immediate friends we can rely on and have fun with. A buddy of one of my friends is in one of my classes.

The school as a whole always looks for ways to reach out and make us feel welcomed. They put special programs on for international students that are fun, informational, and good for building community. At the beginning of the semester, we all presented on different aspects of Hungarian culture. It was a great way to get to know other international students, learn about Hungary, and have fun! The school had a midterm party for the Calvin students, which is just another example of how the school strives to help us feel welcomed."

Katie Munshaw