

**EXCHANGE STUDENT OF THE MONTH**

# Raquel Gardener

**MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY AND  
CRIMINOLOGY**

**HOME UNIVERSITY: DEAKIN UNIVERSITY**

**COUNTRY: MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA**



WHEN DECIDING TO STUDY ABROAD, HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO COME TO K-STATE RATHER THAN ANOTHER UNIVERSITY?

I knew from the very beginning that I wanted to do my exchange in the USA. Initially, I was thinking of going to a coastal area, but after careful consideration I decided I want to go somewhere that wasn't 'made for tourists', I wanted the true American experience! When researching the partner universities, I just fell in love with K-State and how much school spirit there was. I just knew that it was the school for me!

WHAT SORT OF SERVICE LEARNING OR PROJECT ARE YOU DOING OUTSIDE OF YOUR CLASSES? DESCRIBE WHAT YOU DO WITH THIS. HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT FINDING IT?

This semester, I have tried to take part in everything that has been thrown at me. My professor offered me the opportunity to volunteer with Manhattan's Barrier Free Theatre. We work with various individuals in the community who have different disabilities and teach them drama skills. We devise an original play based on the ideas and concepts suggested by members of the group. It has been such an amazing opportunity, and I have learned so much from being able to actually apply the skills and information from my class

I also help teach acting to students who are on the autism spectrum, along with their peers and siblings. It is great to see all these kids growing in their acting ability and confidence levels. I do this two afternoons a week, and it has definitely been a highlight of my time here.

Other than this, I volunteer with AFS, an organization that focuses on high school exchange programs. I was an exchange student in high school, and I volunteer with them back in Australia, so it was an excellent automatic link that I had with the Manhattan community.

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE US UPON ARRIVAL? WAS IT WHAT YOU EXPECTED OR WERE THERE ANY BIG SURPRISES?

I had been to the US before, but only for a holiday and it was five years ago. I had very little knowledge about the Midwest, and I was so surprised and appreciative of the sheer kindness and hospitality shown by everyone. The first person I met from Manhattan was in Dallas. Due to flight cancellations, I was told I couldn't get to Manhattan until the next week, and a complete stranger who didn't know me from a bar of soap gave up his seat so that I could make it to Manhattan on time! I knew from the beginning that I would love Kansas, but it has definitely exceeded expectations

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT BEING A K-STATE STUDENT?

There are so many things, it's hard to choose! I am really loving the enormous amount of school spirit shown not only by staff and student, but the entire local community. University life here is so different to in Australia, and I am always left flabbergasted by how much love people have for their school.

I am also so, so appreciative of my dorm and my roommates. Other than other exchange students, these guys were the first people I met and we have become like a little family. In Australia, we don't have roommates, so it has been so great getting to know these people as if they were my own sisters. I was even allowed to put on an Australian themed program for people in my dorm, and everyone was so interested to learn about my culture. It's just great!

WOULD YOU MIND SHARING A PHRASE OR WORD FROM YOUR HOME COUNTRY AND WHAT IT MEANS?

'True blue'. This term is generally used in the saying 'True blue Aussie'. It more or less means someone who is loyal, fun, honest, down to earth and hard working, the values that my country, and in fact a lot of countries, emphasize. If you live by this on exchange, you are going to get the most out of your experience on exchange!



