Exchange to Tsinghua University (Beijing, China) - Fall 2018
School of economics and management

Before exchange
The procedures to apply to Tsinghua University is very straightforward and you should not worry too much. Keep in mind that as long as you follow all the procedures and answer all of the online questions honestly, you should be accepted and ready to get your Chinese student visa pretty quickly.

One more thing to note is that China is neither a cash-based society nor a credit-based society. The Chinese are very proud that they have surpassed all advanced countries in terms of being the first to change comprehensively the way human beings purchase goods. It is very convenient to have either Wechat Pay or Alipay. It takes only 2 seconds to make any transaction and almost everyone uses it as a method of payment (The only place that I couldn't use my Wechat Pay was in a restaurant by the Everest's campsite, otherwise there should be no problem not having any cash with you when you go out).

During exchange
Accommodation
Exchange students have two options of accommodation: On-Campus dorms or Off-Campus. If you choose to live on campus, there are three options: single room, separate rooms and a shared bathroom with another student; and double rooms (single room and using the public bathroom).
If you want to live on campus, you should register online as soon as possible because they normally do not have enough rooms for every student. Living on campus, however, comes with some dorm rules: no hot water from 12 am-7 am and 2 pm-5 pm and no visitors after 11 pm. They will also provide a cleaning service every two days. Off-campus accommodation is considered a more expensive option and it ranges from 5,000-10,000 RMB per month (CA $1,000-2,000), however, it will be more convenient for those who usually stay late.

One notice: Never drink tap water! Even if it's boiled, it’s still not safe to drink since it might be contaminated.

Tsinghua Old Gate, a symbolic gate that represents Tsinghua University

**Academics**
Most of the courses taught at Tsinghua are worth 3 credits (equivalent to 2 credits transferred back to SFU); lectures are also held once a week. Chinese language courses are exceptional: normally 4 credits for 2 classes per week. The language courses can be separated into 4 levels, of which the first level is equivalent to HSK3 so it is totally not for Chinese beginners. As for Economics major, classes’ contents are not that heavy but it focuses a lot on mathematics problem-solving, so the final exams would be really difficult if you are not a math lover.

**Clubs**
There are quite a few clubs that Tsinghua students organize, however, there are not so many clubs that international students actually join. Most of the international student dominated clubs are related to languages or cultures, which Tsinghua's Chinese students don't have too much of interest. It’s such a big drawback that not so many international students and Chinese students
become friends. However, you can still reach out to make more friends there at Tsinghua since there are students who want to be friends with international students.

Travel and Transportation
It is super cheap to travel in China and you can book your trains, hotels on your phone. All of the steps are quite easy and not so many Chinese skills are needed here. You just need to give counter people your phone with the booking code, along with your passport then you are set to go to any corner of China. You can also opt for tour trips since this kind of business is very cheap in China and I still don’t understand how they can make a profit. Recommended places: Tibet, Guangdong, Shanghai and its nearby area.

Advice:
Lots of people had said Beijing was the most polluted city on earth and its air quality was far behind Vancouver's, however, during my stay in China, Beijing stood out to be the cleanest city in China with the blue sky throughout the months. There were one or two polluted days when I was there though. I heard air quality in Beijing has been significantly improved since early 2018, after they had relocated most of the factories in Beijing to nearby provinces.
Last picture of Tsinghua in January 2019