Studying business at SFU, I went on exchange to Seoul National University (SNU) in South Korea, from March 1st to August 31st, 2016.

Being a citizen of South Korea, I did not have to apply for any visas; thus here I will focus more on sharing the academic and general student life at SNU. Please refer to other exchange reports for application processes and for life in general in Korea. You could read reports written by students who visited Yonsei or Korea University.

* Housing

You will receive several emails once you are accepted into SNU, one of which will be about housing. I strongly recommend applying for on-campus housing, for it is very cheap at SNU compared to that at other partnering schools of SFU in Korea and any type of off-campus housing. It costs between 500 to 800 dollars for a semester, while this amount would only pay for a month's rent if you decide to live off-campus. Moreover, while houses in Vancouver require only half a month's rent as security deposit, those in Korea ask between thousands to tens of thousands of dollars. And as a result you'd have to carry a large amount of money from Canada to Korea and vice versa. There are facilities called "gosiwons" where no deposit is needed, but they are too small and uncomfortable. I am not sure about homestays since I never searched for one, but in my opinion, applying for on-campus housing is the best option unless you have a relative or a friend in Korea you could live with. Moreover, it would surely be better to save three months' rent and go on a trip at the end of your exchange semester.
At SNU housing, residents are randomly selected among applicants using a computer program. However, as far as I know, exchange students are given priority. After exchange student applicants are accepted, remaining space is allocated to undergraduate freshmen and seniors enrolled at SNU.

There are three undergraduate housing buildings: building no. 906 which is a corridor access type and has double rooms with bathrooms inside; building no. 919 that is an apartment type and has suites (three double rooms) with a shared bathroom and a living room; and buildings no. 921 to 926, which are corridor access types and have shared bathrooms. Building no. 906 has the newest and fanciest facilities, while buildings no. 921 to 926 are rather old. When I was assigned to building no. 919, I was very anxious as I had to live with 5 other roommates. I had had my own room and bathroom all my life, and did not enjoy living with other people. However, as I am even offering living on-campus in this report, my worries were proved groundless.

There are a lot of advantages to living on-campus; you can make good friends very easily and quickly; you can swiftly come back to your room between classes and take a rest; and you do not have to wait in long lines to get on buses packed with people, saving a lot of time on the road since there would be a traffic jam during rush hour, both in early mornings when coming to school and later that day again on your way back home. On the contrary, living on-campus, my roommate left our room 5 minutes before class since his classroom was in the building closest from our dorm. In my case, I could stay in my room until 15 minutes before class because I could take a shuttle bus circulating the whole campus.

Most basic facilities, such as convenience store, fitness room, laundry room, cafeteria, and bakery are offered. In particular, cafeterias are turned into study rooms outside mealtimes, which saves students from their bothersome walk to the library.

* Dining within campus

Eating in SNU is very affordable. You would have to go outside campus if you want special meals, but normally you could eat on-campus. Meals at on-campus cafeterias or restaurants cost between 1-20 dollars, but usually 3-5 dollars, with unlimited side dishes and rice. I especially recommend Cafeteria No.3 in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences area (Bldg. 75-1), for it provides the most delicious food among on-campus cafeterias for the cheap price. Don’t also forget to utilize various apps and websites that show menus offered for each meal at each cafeteria.
On-campus cafeterias are usually a five to thirty minute walk from the dormitory; if you are too lazy for even that distance, you can visit residence dining halls in undergraduate and graduate dormitories. At undergraduate dormitories you swipe your card, and at graduate ones you purchase meal tickets. Lastly, you can very conveniently use delivery services whenever you want, even at late nights, since Korea has a very quick and convenient food delivery culture – in fact, you will run into many delivery men as you go in and out of dormitories.

* Libraries

There are two central libraries within campus at Seoul National University: one is the old main building, and the other is Kwanjeong building, built in 2015. Students need their ID cards to enter the libraries, borrow books, and reserve group study rooms. Kwanjeong building is fully equipped with a lot of high-tech, user-friendly facilities: there is space for students to take a nap, a multimedia plaza where two to six students can watch a movie together, a music appreciation seats, and a lot of Blu-ray movies by genre, which resembles a DVD rental shop.
* Classes

Grades from your classes at exchange are not included in cgpa but rather transferred based on a pass or fail system. This means you just have to escape an F since SNU gives a pass grade up to a D. I took four courses and audited one, because I had already started my company and had to spare some time to manage the business. However, I advise taking 18 credits, which is the maximum. Taking 18 credits might seem too tough for an SFU student, but Korean students normally take between 18 and 21 credits a semester, while engaging in club activities, working part-time to pay for school, going out, etc. Thus taking 18 credits should not be too difficult for exchange students, for whom passing the course is sufficient. At SNU, most classes are taught either in Korean or in English. I took four in Korean and one in English. While it may vary depending on the department, business classes run in Korean use a relative grading system, and those run in English use an absolute system. Another advantage of being an exchange student is that if you manage to keep up with your grades until right before the final exam, you do not really have to take a final, regardless of the grading system the course takes. Suppose you have your finals on the first, third, and fourth days of your first exam week, and one more right on the day before the last exam day in the second week. You can set out on a trip after taking your exams until on the fourth day, without having to wait and study for the last exam for more than a week. If it was a course graded on a curve, it would in fact be a win-win deal where a SNU student receives a better grade and an exchange student gets to miss a final without failing the course.
Wrapping up the report, I would recommend going out for an exchange program for two semesters. As I had already lived in Seoul for a long time, there was nothing really new for me about living in Korea. However, getting involved in campus life as an exchange student in Korea, which was different from that in Canada, was a new, exciting adventure. Another benefit of going on exchange is that you can travel to neighboring countries once your semester is over. I applied for one semester only since I had to come back to Canada in six months due to personal reasons. Still, I strongly urge you to spend at least a year out in a different environment during your four years of college life. Whether you may stay for two semesters at a same school or visit two different schools for a semester each, you will for sure be able to gain experiences and broaden your horizons. I have so many more things to say, about course registration and club activities for example. There are also many corrections I want to make in the reports written by previous exchange students, although I am not sure if they just reported incorrect information or if things have simply been updated. However, since I am running out of word limits, I recommend attending the pre-departure orientation and asking students who have most recently been on exchange for more specific information.