Exchange Report

Preparation for exchange

After you decide you will go on an exchange term to Korea, make sure to apply student visa to South Korea. It takes approximately two weeks to get the visa down. Also, apply for school residence if you want to live on campus. However, the condition of living standard is not as good as in North America. The following pictures are a living room in student dorm in SNU. For the bedroom, two persons need to share one room. If you want to apply for the dorm, you need to have health certificate which you can get from your family doctor. Also, if you feel uncomfortable to live with someone else, it is a good idea to live near the campus. For SNU exchange students, living near the SNU subway station is a great idea since it is really convenient. It takes about 10 to 15 minutes to go to school and there are a lot of restaurants and shops around that area. The rent fee is around 550,000 to 700,000 won which is cheaper than Vancouver since the overall living standard is cheaper. As a result, you can choose to bring all essential living goods or you can purchase them in Korea. Taxi is really cheap in Korea and the start rate is 3000 won or 6000 won depends on the colour of the taxi. It is better to bring US dollar currencies because of better exchange rate. As we all know that Canadian is a small currency so the exchange rate is unstable for different exchange shop. In addition, I highly recommend to change money in Myeongdong since it is a tourist area and the exchange rate is one of the highest in Seoul.
During Exchange

I recommend that you should arrive before school starts and join all of the orientations that you may have. You would meet your potential classmates and ask others which courses you should take as an exchange student. In addition, there might be some city tours held by your host university. Moreover, you should join some school clubs and enjoy the events and activities that they held. It would help you to explore Korea and fit into their culture. Korea culture is a mixture of Chinese culture and Japanese culture. As you can see that Gyeongbokgung is a small version of the Imperial Palace in Beijing, China. The following are some famous place in Seoul.
Besides all the well-known places in Seoul, Korean food is so great. There are so many delicious Korean dishes like Boribap, Kimchi, Bulgogi, Samgyeopsal, Jajangmyeon, and etc. Most of the dishes is made of rice, flour, and pork. In history, the weather is really cold in Korea so people can hardly grow vegetables. They store cabbages with spicy sauces and let it ferment in order to storage and eat at winter. They keep this habit and eat a lot of kimchi for every meal. Moreover, Korean people really love desserts since coffee shops and cafes are all over the city. There are many global brand cafe stores in Seoul. However, there are not so many fruits in Seoul, maybe because of the cold weather. You can hardly find fruits other than grapefruits, oranges, strawberries and apples. The following are some pictures that would give you a brief idea about the foods in Korea.
Strawberry dessert

Late night snack

Raw crab in soy sauce
Mango Shaved Ice

Strawberry Shaved Ice

Kang Ho Dong Baekjong
For academic parts, the lecture format and school system are almost the same in SFU. The credit per course is usually around three to four credits and the class size is around 80 to 150 students for upper levels. Importantly, the courses register system is different than SFU’s system. They have one open enrollment date for all the student in SNU, as a result, you need to refresh the web and get into the courses. The grading scales is similar as they also do curves in some classes. For SNU, the campus is huge and it is the biggest university in Korea. It is better to choose classes that the classrooms are in the same building.

For the weather, it is really cold in Seoul and the temperature difference is huge, so remember to dress warm and do not get cold. Seoul snows a lot and there was a huge snow in March. As a result, I got a serious bad cold. I really recommend to dress more and keep warm. Also, there are many places that worth to visit like Myeongdong, Hongdae, Ewha, Dongdaemun and etc. you can buy clothes, accessories, cosmetics and small toys. There are so many different kinds of makeup brands with decorated packs. They really cute and relatively cheap compare to North America. I think you would enjoy shopping in Seoul.

Reflection After Exchange

I have learned a lot from this experience not only for the academic courses but also for being independent and living alone in a new environment. I was living with my family when I was in Vancouver so I do not need to worry too much about house cares and different kinds of bills. After this exchange term, I become more independent and can take myself better. You would be nervous and uncomfortable about culture difference. However, everything will turn out to
be fine in the end. I strongly recommend to take some Korean courses before departure since usually Korean people do not speak English and you would find a hard time to communicate. Also, you should join SNU Buddy or other kinds of international student clubs which would definitely help you to make friends and meet new peoples. Furthermore, download and register Kakaos. It is like whatsapp in North America and you would use it quite often. The above is all the information that I found important to know and I hope that every exchange student would have a great time in Seoul.