Exchange Report

Introduction

Partner university: National Taiwan University (Business)
Country: Taiwan
City: Taipei
Major/faculty: College of Management – Department of Finance
Dates/term(s) of exchange: Spring 2018 (February – June 2018)

Preparation for exchange

1. Include information you would have found valuable when planning your exchange

   Reach out and speak to people whom have completed an exchange in Taiwan or those who have lived there. I found emailing exchange advisors to clarify credit transfer procedures, timelines and caveats early on especially helpful. Once my exchange to NTU was confirmed, I reached out to the assigned NTU advisor for questions I had with regards to NTU-specific questions. I was also assigned a NTU Buddy, whom helped me significantly with course registration questions that I had.

2. Packing, what to bring

   If you will be doing a Spring exchange, I recommend bringing a light jacket. Early Spring can be chilly. For the later Summer months, pack light, breathable clothing as you will be sweating a lot due to the humid, hot weather. As it tends rain heavily in Taiwan during certain months, rain boots will also be useful. Since NTU’s dormitory (Prince BOT Chang Hsing) does not provide pillows, the bed mattress and blankets. You can bring a small pillow from home to be more cost-efficient or alternatively purchase them at the dormitory or Ikea when you arrive. I also recommend bringing your own internet wireless router there to save time and effort of getting one.

3. Travel and transportation

   For Canada to Taiwan flights, China Airlines, EVA Airlines or Air Canada offer direct flights to Taipei. Public transportation in the city convenient. MRT trains are extremely clean and organized, but take precaution not to eat on platforms or in trains as they do enforce fines. Bus routes are convenient but may be tricky if you are not familiar with the area or not familiar with the language. I would advise monitoring Google Maps during the ride if so. Taiwan is very safe. There are a lot of CCTVs on streets and walkways are well lit. I would not feel unsafe walking or cycling alone late at night.

4. Financial details (i.e. cash/credit card based society, cost of living as compared to Vancouver)

   Cost of living is much cheaper compared to Vancouver. I bought food outside as did not have a kitchen facility at my dormitory. On average per day I spent CAD11 on food (NTD250). For the amount you pay, the value you get for food stretches further in Taiwan- for example a hearty buffet lunch set consisting of meat, vegetables, rice/noodles can cost you as little as CAD3.

During Exchange

• Arrival and orientation

   Take the opportunity to reach out and get to know fellow attendees and NTU volunteers during the orientation. Create contact groups to stay in touch with them and create your support circle for questions, advice or travel plans.
• Accommodation and living

I lived in Prince BOT’s Chang Hsing dormitory. I would recommend incoming exchange students to live at Prince BOT Shui Yuan as it is closer to the metro station and food places. Students may find Shui Yuan’s environment to be livelier as there are more international and exchange students compared to Chang Hsing, whom are likely to share common interests such as travelling or doing outdoor activities such as hiking. From my experience, Chang Hsing’s environment is great for students who prefer a more peaceful and quiet living environment.

• Academic details (lecture format, schedules, grading, etc.)

I took electives and business courses at NTU. I also audited one course which I was very interested in but knew SFU would not transfer the credits (auditing a class - taking the course for no credits). You will be allowed by the professor to sit-in courses and have access to class materials without being required to do coursework or sit for exams. Among the electives I took was a Mandarin language course which was challenging in terms of schedule and time commitment, but worth it. If you want, you can also take courses in other universities such as National Chengchi University (NCCU) and it will be counted towards your credits at NTU. A friend of mine was enrolled in NCCU but took classes with us at NTU as the system in Taipei allows this. More research and communication with your NTU advisor should be done to assess your possibility of doing this.

• Country information (culture, weather, places to visit, etc.)

Go out of your comfort zone and make an effort to get to know people from different communities such as the local Taiwanese, the exchange students and international full-time students at NTU. Traveling and outdoor trips with different groups were always a different and unique experience. Based on your interests you could do various group activities such as hiking, cycling around the city, traveling or restaurant/street food adventures. Make the most of Taiwan’s seasons by visiting places like Yangming Shan and Alishan in the Spring to see the cherry blossoms and watching the dragon boat competition during the Summer. I recommend exploring outside Taipei as much as possible in your first two months to make the most out of your exchange. Tainan has great food, Yilan great surfs, Hualien amazing scenery and food and clear blue shores in Taitung. You can then revisit your favorite provinces during the later months or after your exchange semester.

• Social and extra-curricular activities. Please be mindful that your exchange report will be posted publicly online. While it is great to recommend nightlife destinations, be reminded that when on exchange you are an ambassador of SFU and your exchange report should reflect that.

Participating in the International Companions for Learning (ICL) program was one of the most meaningful and best decisions I made during my exchange. It is a cultural exchange program in which you conduct weekly Skype session with a NTU/ Mandarin speaking partner to a group of school children from an elementary/middle school in Taiwan (the majority of participating schools in provinces outside Taipei). During the Skype sessions you share and discuss with students about culture from your country etc. There are also opportunities to visit your students (and other students and schools that you are not assigned to) in-person and participate in fun activities and local traditions that are special to their specific school/province. http://icl.tw/index/schools

Night-life is not big in Taiwan. Most locals prefer singing karaoke or playing board games at board game cafes with their friends. I would recommend trying activities such as those with local friends as those experiences are truly fun and new (very different compared to the karaoke and board game café experience in Vancouver).
Reflection After Exchange

- What you've learned and the challenges you faced

Rest well! Exchange can get overwhelming during times such as when you are getting to know and trying to remember all the new people you met, maximizing travel opportunities or going through that finals exam rush. The fear of missing out happens during exchange but it’s okay to sit out on that one or two exciting travel plans that you were invited to. Continue developing your independence and self-reliance skills. There will be times during your exchange when you feel down which is completely normal. Make an ongoing effort to keep in touch and maintain meaningful relationships built with your friends during exchange. These friendships made my exchange a truly meaningful and special. If I am lucky, I will have the opportunity to visit them or host them in the near future.

- What you wish you knew before you left

Bring some warm clothes for early Spring. It can be very chilly. Equip yourself with an insect repellant as soon as you arrive. You will need this to ward of the insect bites (mosquitoes and especially little black mosquitoes).

- Words of wisdom for other students

Grab opportunities, take risks and step out of your comfort zone. Reflect and use this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get to know yourself better.

Photos:
How will the course proceed?

- Lectures
- Exercise Discussions
- Group student presentations (presentations must be approved by the instructor in advance)
- A full-term paper with 25 pages in English, using the footnotes citation
- The presentation Power Point slides should be uploaded to Github, sent to the teaching assistant, Mr. Zhou in Wy, or to the assistant and the instructor
- Building teams, the order of presentation and content will be arranged with an assistance of the I.A.