Before I go on exchange, I did lots of research regarding which school I want to go to best. I considered the courses they offer and the location they are at. Finally, I decided to attend Session D starting on July 2nd to August 11th at the University of California Berkeley, located at the United States. Comparing to other Universities, UCB offers the most courses during the summer session. After I chose UCB, I emailed all course information to SFU for evaluation that I am interested in attending. Finally, I enrolled in Hass Business courses, Financial Derivative and Investment classes, when UCB is open for enrollment. After this process, I had to start working on the studying visa F-1 to study at UCB. The visa was very easy to attain which you just follow the instruction on Calcentral and apply for it. Since I am going to live in the dorm at UCB during the exchange, I had to prepare everything that I need to live there. These include such as bedding sheets, pillow, shower utensils, slippers used in the dorm and shower. Things that are bigger and cumbersome, such as blankets and hair dryer, I decided to buy them when I arrive in the USA. Finally, when it is one month from departing, I ordered the plane ticket which cost almost CAD 400. Before I left Vancouver, I brought USD 2500 cash and Canadian Master Cards.

Since my sister lives in Palo Alto, I arrived few days before the school starts. During that time, I bought the things that I need to use at UCB. One important thing that is helpful during the stay at UCB is a shower basket. Since the dorm only has public shower and washroom outside your room, it is very inconvenient to carry your shower utensils without a shower basket. Places you can visit at Palo Alto includes Stanford, Google, and Facebook. Palo Alto is an only one-hour drive away from UCB, so lots of people visit here during the summer session. Also, I registered for a Chase Bank debit card which includes Visa. It is very convenient for online shopping since some stores only take US cards. Furthermore, holding too much cash is dangerous. The cost of living in Berkeley is similar to living in Vancouver but in USD.

Finally, I went to UCB on July 2nd. It is very convenient to travel around in California since there are many Ubers. School starts on July 3rd. The first course I attended is the Financial Derivative class. At the first class, I think the course was okay; however, later I found the course gets hard because the professor hardly explains the process of a formula. We had to copy our notes ourselves, and there is no ppt. I noticed all my notes are formulas. In one class, he started talking about matrix which I have never learned, and he did not teach us how the matrix works but only gives us the final solution. Since the UCB canvas had problems, we did not have any hand outs until the second week, which we already had three classes; thus, I decided to drop this class and switched to vocal music during the second week. At the end of the second week, it is the last chance to swap classes. There is one thing one must look out for when swapping classes. For each course, you can only swap once, any additional swaps, you would have to pay for the course. Vocal music was very interesting. Each week there are two classes from 11 am to 1:30 pm. During each class, the teacher would teach everyone some warm up techniques and gives everyone a chance to practice singing in front of the class. During the final, we can choose one of the two songs we learn in class and sing it in front of the class. Also, people who prepared their own performance can also perform during the final. For this class, we had to write music journals.
every day for songs we worked and techniques we practiced. Our final grade is composed of our participation in class, homework journals, and final performance.

The other course I took was Investment (UGBA133). The workload for this class was heavy. There are three lectures and one discussion classes every week for six weeks from 3:30 pm to 6 pm. Each class, the professor taught two to four chapters, and the daily homework includes reading the Liar’s Poker and assigned articles (1-2 articles). There is also a final project to analyze a company’s stock using the valuation models that we learned in this course. For this project, we are also taught to use information from Bloomberg database and FactSet which is very helpful. It is crucial to find a responsible team for the group project since it takes a lot of effort and time. Our final grade for this class is composed of a quiz, midterm, group project, and final exam.

At Berkeley, I live in Unit 2; the Residence Assistance always plans events at night so that we can gather and social together. I think Unit 2 is a good choice because lots of exchange students live there. Also, you have meals point which you can use in the dining hall, Coffee shops, and school shops. If you don’t eat at the school dining hall very often, it is very hard to use all the points unless you buy food and drinks at other Berkeley stores where you can use your meals point. In the end, I still have 60 meals point left an equivalent of USD 60 which is a waste. There are also planned trips to go to LA or other places which you can pay and go during the weekends. Places I visited included the Big C at the mountain top of Berkeley, there is a big swing, and you can view sunset and night view. The weather at Berkeley, California is similar to Vancouver; however, it doesn’t rain. During morning and night, it is a bit cold but quite warm during the afternoon. Since Berkeley is very close to San Francisco, we like to visit there a lot. San Francisco is very cold because the wind there is very big. We had to wear a thick jacket to stay warm. Places you can visit include Twins Peak, China Town, Pier 33, Union Square and go to Alcatraz Island and Angel Island from San Francisco.

In this exchange, I learned that meeting new people and making friends is important so that I can hang out and discuss homework together. Managing to read all the assigned homework, reading, and prepare for exams while I want to visit a new city is a challenge. I had to work hard during the weekdays to have time to play during the weekends. Overall, it was a wonderful experience to study at another school in another country.
KoJa Kitchen

Skydive at Golden Gate
Moffitt Library at Berkeley

Night Scene at Twins Peak, San Francisco
BigC at Berkeley

Going to Alcatraz Island from San Francisco to visit the Prison