Exchange Report

Studying Abroad at University of California, Berkeley

My name is Scarlett, and I am a 3rd year business student concentrating in Finance and Accounting. My partner university for my exchange was University of California, Berkeley and I took one finance course and one music course there. I studied in Berkeley during Session D 2017 for its summer session, and my study in Berkeley lasts for only 6 weeks—since only Session D has the courses I want. Going to UC Berkeley was my top and only choice because I have always dreamed to study in one of UCs since I was young. Therefore, when I went to the exchange fair event and found that UC Berkeley starts to become one of partner universities in SFU, I can’t wait to start my application to become one of the UCBers. My report will include some tips that I think should be helpful for you concerning living and studying in UCB. Hope you like it!
Preparation for Exchange

Since I was in Hong Kong having my internship before I went to UCB for exchange, I was very busy working and did not have enough time to get prepared. There were some things I regret for not doing more research on when preparing for exchange. For example, I should have researched the weather history in Berkeley and asked friends in Berkeley about it. I thought the weather for summer in Berkeley should be as hot as what the weather is in Vancouver, however, it was the coldest summer I have ever suffered. By not doing enough research, I ended up packing clothes that are far away from enough then I needed to.

I also regret not researching more information about the student residence. Because it is more convenient to live on campus, I chose to live in school, and the residence hall I chose is the International House. IHouse is a great place for one to live with students from all around the world and make friends with them. It is also a great place for one who have courses in Hass Business school—for it is the residence that has shortest distance from Hass! However, the residence is kind of old and is not as new as other residence in Unit 2 and unit 3. When I went visit my friend living in Unit 2 and had a look at her room, I felt regret, cause the living environment in Unit 2 was quite good and its residents had more choice on food.

As for packing, I don’t think there are anything special that should be mentioned, cause everything can be bought in Berkeley. Cost of living at the residence is a bit more expensive than living in SFU, but it is much more convenient than living outside campus. By living in campus, since the residence is equipped with dining hall, students don’t need to cook by themselves—the busy studying life give student no time to cook.

Besides, if you want to apply for a debit card, be sure go to bank and apply for it as soon as possible once you arrive. After you apply for it, it takes the bank between one and two weeks to mail the card to you.

During Exchange

It is very important to know the dropping/swapping policies in UCB, since you may take the course and want to change it. You can drop your courses in first week with refund, and after that you can swap course with no penalty. Attention! You can only swap your credits once. After swapping credits for once, your credits will be invalid. Besides, you may be interested in the grading system in UCB. Unlike SFU, most courses in UCB don’t use curve system, that means peer pressure is less than SFU. I would say it is easier to get an A level grade in UCB than in SFU. The lecture format is quite similar as SFU’s, the only difference is that you may have 3 or 4 classes for one course every week—since it is a condensed course.

Moreover, safety is very important. Unlike SFU Burnaby, UCB is very close to Berkeley downtown and it is kind of messy there. It is better for you not going outside in the night alone. Since it is legal to have gun in USA, sometimes students face danger especially girls. Some of my friends in UCB were robbed once when they went outside alone at night.

As exchange is a good chance not only to study knowledge from other schools but also an opportunity to have a fantastic travel, I strongly recommend you to spend more time travelling all around the city. The art gallery in UCB is fantastic. It holds different shows in specific periods and the shows are really interesting. Since Berkeley has only half an hour driving to San Francisco, you can take a chance travelling in SFO. The golden gate is a place that you definitely should go. Besides, the twin peak is wonderful for having the night view. I also went to do the sky diving with friends I met in UCB, that was
super cool and interesting!

Reflection After Exchange

UCB, as one of the best universities in USA, is a wonderful school to study. For the finance course that I have taken, our instructor invited guest speakers from different areas for 4 times during 6 weeks. Like
SFU, UCB opened a lot of courses for a variety of subjects. Besides my finance course, I also took a music class. In my music class, we learned how to sing jazz and operas, and the classroom atmosphere is quite good—everyone engaged well!

In a word, UCB is a wonderful university to go to. As what SFU always told us to do—engaging the world, you should try more opportunities to go exchange and explore other countries. It will become a precious experience for you by not only increasing your competitiveness when applying jobs but also helping you to broaden your mind and explore other cultures.