Exchange Report

Partner University: De La Salle University, Philippines

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

May 8- August 21/ 2017

During my preparation for my exchange I was able to contact the International Office through e-mail through their official website. In order to find classes I went on the official De La Salle website which shows a list of classes that are offered for each faculty. However, I did not have access to any page to see what days or times these classes are available or for what semester, therefore I strongly recommend that if planning on being an exchange student to De La Salle that you consider traveling there a week in advance to go to the international office to verify classes. Enrolling for classes is a long process and I had to wait 2-3 days when I arrived to the country to be properly enrolled. When packing for the Philippines it is important to bring mosquito repellent and bed bug spray. Clothes should be for tropical weather; however there is a dress code at De La Salle that you have to keep in mind. The dress code is much stricter on the women compared to the men. Women cannot wear shorts that are less than three inches above the knee and spaghetti straps are not allowed. A tank top should not be revealing or else you will be denied entry. Both men and women must be wearing proper footwear to enter the university, which means no flip flops. Every morning before classes start there is a prayer and a national anthem. Many of the exchange students have opened a bank in the Philippines during their stay, but since I was only staying for one semester I just brought with me an international credit card. The cost of living in the Philippines is fairly cheap and it is not safe to travel with more than 5000 pesos around the location of the university. In one week I usually only spend around 1000 pesos on food and drinks.

When I arrived to the Philippines there was an orientation for all international students to get familiar with the campus. There is housing available by residence that can arranged by the international office. The classes are fairly easy but can often be taught depending on the professor in both English and Tagalog even though it is suppose to be an English speaking school. I had to directly speak to each professor of my classes to ensure what kind of language they use. If not, I would suggest to let the professor know that you are an exchange student this term in the beginning of classes so he is aware not to give directions in Tagalog. The class sizes are very small usually max of 30. I took mostly second level classes and the coursework was very easy and the marking scheme was fair. I took five classes during my semester but the ratio of credits changed during my first week at school from 1 DLSU= 1 SFU unit to 1 DLSU= 0.67 SFU unit and so to be considered full time I was required to take five classes. I went during monsoon season and there was often flooding that can reach up to the knees and in most cases school will be canceled. Many professors will also give free cuts of classes once in a while and instead you are required to attend another seminar. The Philippines has a very hot climate and it is important to stay hydrated. Due to the hot climate there are a lot of insects and I often got new bites all over my arms and legs, therefore it is important to regularly apply bug repellent on clothes or on bed sheets. There is no tissue paper in the school washrooms or in any public places; I would have to bring
my own. It is also very difficult to get good wifi and so I purchased “pocket wifi” which is a portable device that will hot spot you but there are times it too cannot get connection. In order to get fast wifi I would suggest coffee shops such as Coffee Bean and apply for a membership which is only 200 pesos ($6 CAN). There are many activities to do around the school as it is beside a few malls and pubs. Transportation includes jeeps and tricycles and usually only cost less than 10 pesos, depending on the destination. Sometimes exchange students would be overwhelmed by these transportation vehicles because they are often very squished and instead would take Grab or Uber. During my stay I got to travel to places such as Tagatay, Batangas and Subic, which are mostly beach and tourist destinations that are around 2 to 3 hours away from Manila.

During my exchange I learnt how to deal with new environments, especially if there is a language barrier. Many of the exchange students that come to De La Salle are often Japanese or French. Before leaving I strongly suggest that you try to obtain your own copy of your official transcript while one is sent to SFU, because the system is can often be delayed. Luckily, when I request my official transcript I requested for it to be express which was only 300 pesos and it was available the next day. I also had to apply for a name change because when I first arrived the registrar typed in my full name wrong and it took almost two months for the international office to coordinate with the registrar office to get it fixed. It is important that you regularly check up on your documents such as your special student permit to know its status. I took out a student loan this semester and SFU Financial Aids and Awards requires you to get a document signed to confirm that you passed all your classes. If you are one of the students who will need this document signed it should go to registrars office and not the international office. There are many activities and things to experience in Manila and although it is a huge culture shock at first it is a great opportunity and I encourage you to visit national museums or school activities in the COSCA office where you can volunteer your time in the slums. I was able to volunteer at a nearby slum and teach an art project and I can guarantee it is something that you will always remember! Students are very friendly and if you are lost the local students are always available to help you, especially your IC Buddy that will be assigned to you during orientation.