Exchange Report

I am Manshu, a fourth year accounting student at Beedie School of Business. I was on exchange to University of California, Berkeley in the United States for six weeks in Summer 2017.
Preparation for Exchange

It would be really nice if you can find a friend who would like to go on exchange with you. I was lucky enough to have one. We applied and prepared for the exchange together, and we shared information with each other. Partner university’s official website provided most of the information we needed. You may want to look at the partner university’s website before you apply. For UC Berkeley, it has five sessions this year from Session A to Session E with different periods and starting dates. We applied for Session D simply because it fit our schedule better.

As for what to bring, you can easily purchase almost everything from Amazon and you can enjoy Amazon Prime free trial with your student email. I purchased linen packs and a pillow for $70 and $10 respectively from International House (I-House), which is the dorm I stayed at. As “The coldest winter I ever spent was a summer in San Francisco.” suggests, you may probably wanna pack up a coat or two.

We chose to fly with Delta rather than United Airlines for an obvious reason – we don’t want to be dragged off a plane. It was a short flight for less than three hours. We then took Uber to I-House.

I bring my USD credit card and eight hundred cash with me. The cost of living in Berkeley is about the same as compared to Vancouver.

During Exchange

The orientation was quite fun and simple with snack and ice cream. The presenters talked about rules and regulations at I-House, and then we were given the time to network with fellow students.

I applied for a single room and it’s quite cozy, but it’s close to the elevator and my neighbor is noisy. I can hear everything.

I walk to my classroom since my dorm is on the campus. I usually take Uber or Lyft with friends to travel, because public transport is not very convenient just like it is in Vancouver.
I take Investments and Voice Class. The courses keep me really busy, especially Investments with a lot of readings and lecture notes. The professor for Investment is approachable, knowledgeable and has a sense of humor. He invited several guest lecturers from Bloomberg and FactSet, etc. It’s not common to have guest lecturers at SFU. I would recommend you to take the course with Ethan Namvar. Besides, the midterm and final exams are not difficult. As for Voice Class, it’s fun and engaging. Professor Candace Johnson gives feedback for individual students.

Berkeley doesn’t feel as safe as Vancouver. The streets are not that clean. There were a few incidents happened during my stay. It’s always better to be cautious and to stay safe.

I visit San Francisco almost every weekend because there are so many to see and so many to explore in the city. You will not miss the iconic Golden Gate Bridge. My friends and I rent bikes at Pier 39 and rode along the seashore to the bridge on a beautiful Sunday. It was foggy and windy on the bridge, so do bring a coat or blanket.

There are also many museums that you may want to check out, including Exploratorium, California Academy of Sciences, Walt Disney Family Museum, Legion of Honor, Cable Car Museum, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and de Young Museum. You would not be disappointed. The museums are one of the main reasons why I love the city. I wish that Vancouver could have more fun museums like San Francisco.

You cannot miss the one of a kind Alcatraz Island that was a federal prison from 1934 to 1963. It’s better to book your Alcatraz Cruise ticket in advance since it sold out quickly. My friend and I booked our tickets even before our departure from Vancouver. Taking the historical cable car is another unique experience. The only drawback is the long wait to get on a cable car. The queue is exceedingly long even on weekdays. The only way to avoid such long queue is to be there early, probably before 10 am in the morning.

International House organizes activities on weekend and my friend and I joined in the tour to Six Flag Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo. It’s an animal theme park that is even better than our expectations.

I also took a Segway tour in downtown which was so much fun. It’s probably one of the best ways to get around in downtown. There are different tours and I chose San Francisco Wharf and Waterfront Tour. I will definitely visit the city again and do another Segway
tour. Driving a GoCar is another special way to explore the city. You would need your driver license to rent a GoCar.

We also took a trip to Napa Valley and it was about an hour drive from the university. It’s a perfect destination for a day trip or weekend getaway. We woke up at 3 am in order to watch the sunrise on a hot air balloon. The ride was smooth and peaceful. We then visited a famous winery and learned about brewing and wine tasting. Skydiving is another unforgettable experience. There are several skydiving companies near Berkeley.

**Reflection After Exchange**

It was quite challenging to maintain a balance between life and study because the courses were taught 2.5 times faster than a normal term. I studied almost every single day. It required me to study efficiently and manage my time wisely. My strategy is to study as much as possible on weekdays so that I can have spare time to enjoy my life on the weekend.

Overall, the six-week adventure is fun and challenging. It is a truly unforgettable experience. I met so many great people from all over the world and got the chance to make friends with them. I am grateful for the opportunity to study at Berkeley and thankful for the support from my friends and SFU.