



“Study Report”

University of California, Santa Cruz
United States of America



Presented by

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Introduction

This report is a study report describing a life in University of California, Santa Cruz, U.S.A. through an exchange program between Thammasat University and its partner universities around the world. This report includes all relevant information from the author's perspective as an exchange student such as study life, places to visit, friends, etc. Other important information such as dilemmas and solutions facing by exchange students in United States are also included in this report.



Registration

The first and foremost part of an exchange student life is probably course registration. Before registering any course at a partner university, a student must make sure that course credit transferring process is approved by his/ her faculty at Thammasat University to prevent any problem that may arise later on.

In University of California, Santa Cruz (also known as UCSC for abbreviation), exchange students were allowed to register in all courses offered by the university. This did not necessarily need to be only courses offered students' majors. For the first quarter (fall), I was allowed to enroll in courses after its local students. This meant seat quotas were exceeded in some fascinating courses that I was interested in. However, the first two weeks of school during the "add/ drop" period was when either students added/ dropped their classes or professors might add more seat quotas to their classes. So I got to enroll in the courses I wanted to study anyway.

For the second and last quarters (winter and spring, respectively), this was when I did not need to worry about the course registration at all since I was allowed to enroll in courses a day before normal registration of local students. Seat quotas for all courses were reserved for exchange students. Normally, students were not allowed to enroll more than 19 credits per quarter; however, if students' GPAs from previous quarter had exceeded 3.00, they would be allowed to enroll more than 19 credits for the following quarter.

Study Life

A study life of an exchange student in the United States was not as difficult as I expected. In fact, I would consider what I have learned from Thammasat University was way harder than all courses I took in UCSC. Yet, this did not mean UCSC economics department was not great. Economics professors in undergraduate program there would teach their classes in an easier way compared to economics professors here in TU. Additional teaching assistant sections were also provided for students that had trouble catching up with topics in classes. Disabilities Resource Center (DRC) was also available for students with disabilities.

Since most of UC campuses (includes UCSC) were in quarter system, I had to adjust myself toward this new timing system since we studied in semester system at TU. For a quarter system, everything went by much faster than a semester system. Professors would expect students to study by themselves outside of the classrooms as well as they did inside. However, topics and contents that we had studied would be less intense compared to the semester system because timing of this quarter system would not allow us to get into the course materials that deep. Assignments were also given regularly in each class.

The main difference that I found studying aboard was that students there were more independent than students here. Classmates were less likely to become friends if you did not know them before or there were no group projects in the classes. During my exchange year, I would need to attend classes as much as I could or I would directly contact my teaching assistant in each class in case I had missed any of it. Several quizzes and midterms were also given throughout the quarter, so missing classes might have an impact on grades as well.

Friends

This topic can be different among people regarding to their personalities and styles. Since I am an introvert, it was a little hard for me to step up into the crowd to meet others and befriend with them. Fortunately, I had another Thammasat student from another faculty coming with me too. Both of us stayed together for the first few months and broadened our connection to make friends with other exchange/ transferred students. Besides, I also made some friends in classes with group projects.

During studying abroad in the United States, I had chances to meet and travel with Thammasat friends that joined the exchange program as well. Moreover, I also got to meet with their friends from their universities too. It was nice to meet with others and share our experiences with one another.



Travelling

This could be the most interesting part of an exchange student's life that everyone expected from the exchange program. Besides studying experience, travelling was also the main thing I am looking forward to from studying abroad. Since I studied in University of California, Santa Cruz, the first place I had visited was Santa Cruz. There was not much to do in this county except that we had great landscape here. There were beaches, forest, mountains in the area and the places were quite beautiful for nature lovers.

A few weeks after, I had a chance to visit my friends in University of California, Berkeley. This town had more things to do compared to Santa Cruz and the transportation was better. We went to San Francisco together and it was the first time for me. This city was pretty urbanized and it was one of my favorite cities in the U.S. There were shopping malls and high-rise buildings everywhere. Piers around bay area were also the places that everyone must visit.

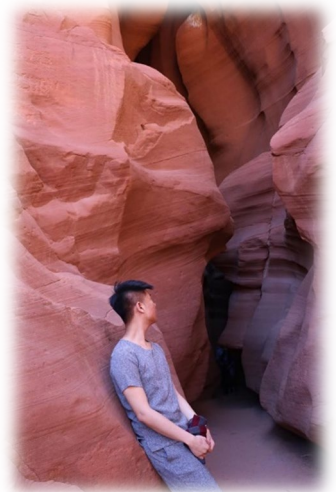
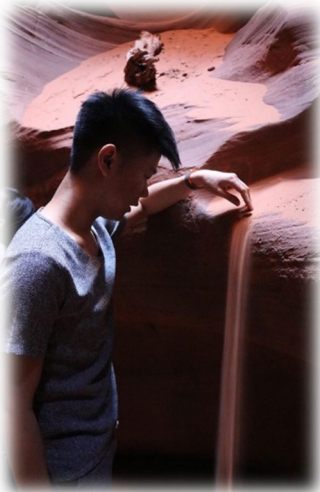
For winter break, it was the first time I had a long vacation ever since I got into the U.S. I visited my friends in San Diego State University in San Diego. It was a huge city and there were cool places to visit such as San Diego Zoo. We also went to clubs in Tijuana, Mexico. After that, I got to meet with other friends in Los Angeles. Hollywood mountain was a great place to go on hiking and Universal Studios and Disneyland were the must-visit theme parks. Food was also amazing in Los Angeles, especially for Asian food.

During the winter break, I had made a long flight to New York from Los Angeles. The weather was quite extreme there and the streets were flooded with snow piling up. New York City was the most urbanized city that I had visited ever. High-rise buildings were there everywhere. Museums were great and the Central Park was beautiful. This was where I celebrated my new year with Thammasat friends that came from all over the universities in North America. After that, I went to Boston to visit several famous universities such as Harvard and MIT.

For spring break, I had done snowboarding in Lake Tahoe and it was my first time ever. It was quite fun to do so. After that, I went to Las Vegas with my friend from my university. Las Vegas was a great city that was filled with entertainment such as casinos and shows. Hotels were excellent and not that expensive there. I also went to Grand Canyon during the break. The place was stunning and there were so many spots for great photos.

When I got back to Santa Cruz, the last thing I had done for travelling was hiking along the trail behind my university to the Garden of Eden. It was pretty and I recommended students to go there next year to visit this place. Lastly, travelling experience can be different among students, the places I have visited along with my opinions toward each place is just a personal feeling. I would suggest everyone to visit other places as well, so we all have more experience to share to the next generation.





Residence

For UCSC, students were more likely to live on campus since the university was located on the mountain. Living off-campus could be troublesome in many circumstances. There were ten residential colleges for students to choose where they wanted to live in. Each residential college has their unique themes and distinctive contribution to the university. I had chosen to live in College Nine because most of the exchange students chose to live in here since its theme was “international.”

Within College Nine, there were different types of rooms for students to choose as well. I lived in the International Living Center (ILC) apartment. Within one apartment, there were four bedrooms, one kitchen, one living room, and one bathroom. I chose to live in a single bedroom because it was the most comfortable compared to double or triple bedrooms. College Nine was highly recommended for economics students too in my opinion because most of the classes would be taught in the buildings near the apartment.

Food

For the first two quarter, I had 7-day meal plan where I could get into any of the dining halls within the university for the whole day, every day and at any time. I enjoyed food in the dining halls for the first few weeks; however, I got bored of it pretty fast since the same menus were repeated every week. Therefore, I decided to cook on my own for the last quarter.

In Santa Cruz, it would take an effort to go to downtown just to have some food to eat. Still, I would have to get into the town at least once every week to get ingredients from grocery to cook on my own. Asian food were not that great in Santa Cruz as well, students preferred to go to the nearest town, San Jose, to eat better Asian food.

Problems & Solutions

Exchange students would have to encounter with problems at some point within the exchange year. I might not have problem with my study life; however, my biggest problem was housemates. I did not get along that well with some of my housemates because our lifestyles were quite different and most of the time this got us into trouble with one another. For instance, I would like to study in my room, but my housemate always made some irritating noise and invited guests to our apartment all the time. I had resolved this problem by moving to another apartment for the quarter.

Overall, it was a fun experience to study aboard in the United States through an exchange program. I had a chance to meet with many people from different places with different languages and cultures. I got to visit places that I had never been to before. And finally, I felt more mature after all of these had gone by.