

Exchange Report

Seoul National University

I went on exchange to Seoul National University (SNU) in South Korea through Simon Fraser University (SFU) in the spring of 2012. I am student at SFU with a major in Applied Mathematics and a minor in Computing Science. In the exchange term, I was involved with the department of Engineering and the department of Business. The reason that I decided to go on exchange to South Korea can be explained through the fact that I love to travel and explore other cultures. This report will briefly provide an overview of the exchange trip including the application process, the actual exchange term and post-exchange period.

To be considered eligible for nomination, one must meet the following requirements posted on the SFU International site. The application process consists of submitting photograph, transcript, statement of interest, study plan, references, resume, budget plan, passport identification and language proficiency form. A few months prior to arrival, we had a pre-departure session that focused on many aspects of exchange studies. A couple of months prior to arrival, I signed up for a program called Buddy Program, where each exchange student is assigned to a domestic student. My buddy and me had email exchanges until we met in South Korea. Because I was scheduled to arrive a bit earlier than the day the dorm was open to students, I missed the chance to live on campus. Instead, I found a homestay through an online booking site called wimdu.com. I have a Canadian citizenship but nonetheless, I had to apply for a student visa. As a Canadian citizen, I applied to be overseas for the next six months just in case.

Upon my arrival, there might have been miscommunications between me and the landlord of the homestay, so she did not actually come to the airport to pick me up and so I called a cab to the homestay. In the first week after I arrived, I began to make adjustments to adapt to the new environment through learning the language, shopping and eating out. A couple of days before the start day of the term, I started having

In terms of academic details, SNU offers about 15% of the academic courses in English. As a non-Korean, I was limited to registering for English courses only. Unlike SFU, the first two days of enrollment are divided between students whose student numbers end up with an even number and student whose student numbers end up with an odd number, and each day can only max up to 50% of the total capacity of the class. Therefore, on the first day, virtually everyone with an odd number as the last digit started the enrollment at 8 PM. As a result of that, not only was there a lag in the system but also the seats were filled up in a matter of seconds. In addition to course registration, students are allowed to get enrolled in a maximum of six courses without any special approval. Students are allowed to drop or swap courses in the first six week without any monetary penalty. Students can access the outlines but the exam dates are not usually specified and are not released until the middle or the end of the term depending on the course and the professor of the course. There is a special kind of form that allows you to try to get a space in a course that is already full, but there is a 90% possibility that you will not succeed in asking to increase the maximum capacity. Unlike SFU, the campus of SNU is extremely large. In fact, it is probably ten times as large as the SFU Burnaby campus. I took five course that belong to three different departments so between classes I had to commute between departments by shuttle bus. There are shuttle buses that circulate the campus, or you could rent a scooter with an international license. If you have decided to go on exchange, I advise you to not only plan your courses early but also the more of them are offered by the same department the less time you have to spend on commuting between departments.

The costs of living in South Korea is not as expensive as in Canada. Eating out usually costs between five and twenty dollars, and drinking is extremely cheap since there is a special kind of drink called Soju that costs one dollar and everyone seems to drink it. At school, whenever I ate at a cafeteria, I paid only around three dollars. Since I was living at a homestay during the exchange term, I did not do much grocery shopping. Compared to Canada, there is no such thing as tips, but there is such as a thing as sale tax but already included in the bills.

Upon arrival, I bought a non-smart phone. As a consequence, I did not use my phone more than ten times. I could not have bought a Sim card because I have a locked phone from Canada. I did have Wifi at home as the source of internet and I found it to be



want to exchange Canadian dollars for Korean won should do it by bank draft rather than cash for a better exchange rate. But the banks in South Korea almost never accept bank drafts, and I never had any use of the bank draft. Therefore, I had most of my transactions done by credit card. Another lesson is that South Koreans do not have a sense of humor like North Americans so when you think you are making a joking, you are probably leading them to think you are trying to offend them and they see them as an offence. For future students, please take the following as a reference: start applications as early as possible, while on exchange, find activities to do and do not get demotivated and upon completion, do whatever it takes to avoid depression and reverse cultural shocks.

Overall, this experience definitely expanded my horizon. I learned a lot not only about Korean culture but also many other aspects of it. I met a lot of other international students and I am beginning to build up an international network.