

*Exchange Study Programme*

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## My Exchange Experience at University of Maryland, College Park

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*University of Maryland is a well-known public funded university. It has over 150 years' history and is the flagship institution of the university system of Maryland.*

The five-month exchange experience is really unforgettable and has become a period which I always call to remembrance, including my friends there and those happy times we've spent together. I'd like to share some of the stories, interesting or awkward, hoping they may be a bit beneficial for those who are going to be an overseas exchange student.

As I do not have much experience travelling far away all by myself, I was not aware that contacting someone beforehand to receive me was that much necessary. So, with two large suitcases and one backpack, I went on the plane which was going to take me to a place totally unfamiliar to me. There was no doubt that "excuse me" and "thank you" became my most frequently used phrases during my first few days there.

### People

Friendliness was my first impression to the people in Maryland. I had no difficulty carrying my luggage to the dormitory because most of the passengers were willing to offer help. There was also a time when I got lost in a snowing day and asked for help to a car waiting for the lights. The couple inside was really easy going and drove me back to the campus. In my eyes, friendliness lied in morning greetings from strangers, drivers waiting for pedestrians to cross the road, and many tiny things happened around me every day.

### Social Life

The first group I joined was CSSA. It was just like a big family,

offering care and support, especially to new-comers. We celebrated the festival of lanterns together by holding a big party and we spent the spring break travelling to Smoky Mountains. There were always a bunch of activities, helping you to explore the new environment. I also enjoyed the local culture much. The basketball game versus Virginia gave me a chance to catch a glimpse of what American culture really is. When I sat inside the gym wearing our symbolic red T-shirt, and when we yelled 'GO Maryland GO!' together, I could feel their passion and was really moved by the spirits. It reminded me of another kind of university life. I enjoyed, and appreciated it much.

### Study

The workload was similar to that in CityU, but it required more independent learning. Three of my four classes were taught without notes or Powerpoint. Therefore, reading textbooks and searching online resources were necessary. It was not easy finding someone to discuss with, so we were expected to collect questions and ask the professor in particular office hours every week. In a word, no one was pushing you, so you should decide whether to take the responsibility of yourself or not.

### Transportation

Transportation was one of the problems I could not get along with. Part of the reason might be my getting used to the convenience of highly developed transportation systems in HK. In Maryland, the number of runs of buses was quite limited, so everyone was supposed to check the schedule in case of waiting for an hour. There were free shuttles running around campus and nearby supermarkets or restaurants, but many were on service for just particular time slots. Moreover, taxis could not be relied on. For a whole semester, I have seen them for no more than five times on the road. In a word, making good plans before going out and buying a bicycle would do much good to you.

### Safety

We had to take the safety issue seriously. To be honest, I didn't pay much attention until a friend of mine was robbed in front of the library. It was hard for me to keep the habit of studying late in libraries during examination periods, for the yard was large and it was crazy for a girl walking alone outside when it was dark. Also,

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as we lived in separated houses located at the verge of the campus, I was a bit worried when anybody could be brought in freely. It was important to always keep in touch with friends, in my own eyes.

In all, I have a lot of words to say about this experience. It enriched my life and helped me learn and develop from particular skills like spoken English, to my own potential such as global perspective and competitiveness. I treasured this exchange experience much.



## My Exchange Experience at Vanderbilt University

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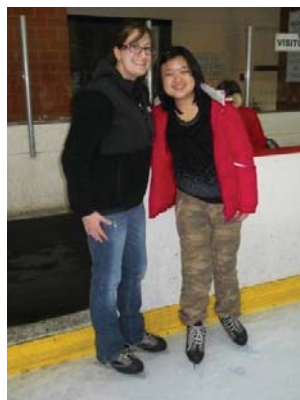
*Vanderbilt University is a top-ranked US private research university especially in the area of Medicine. It has over 140 years' history and has generated 7 Nobel Laureates.*

### Just Arrived

- My last flight was about two hours late.
- People around were very friendly and guided me to the right place when I asked for help.

### Orientation

- The orientation was very useful. I was given a welcome kit. I got to know where to find help when needed as well as some useful phone numbers.
- What's more, I signed for some activities which were designed for new students.



### My Place

- I lived off-campus. The house was large and within 10 minutes walking to the building where most of my classes were conducted.
- There was a gym on my way from campus to the house, so I usually did exercise there before or after school. But I gained much weight because the food there was greasy and served in large size.
- The neighborhood was safe. My roommate was very nice. We even raised a lovely cat in the house.

### My First Class

- The campus was so large that it was hard for me to find my classroom. So before the first class, I went there about half an hour earlier to make sure that I had enough time to find the right classroom.
- The classes were like those in CityU.
- But most of the classes I had chosen were small classes, especially the elective courses in my major.
- Most of the courses had weekly homework.

### People I Met

- People there were very friendly.
- I've made many friends. Some were having the same class as me. Some were met in the after-class activities.
- Some of them were American and some were Chinese. Some were international exchange students like me, from Japanese, France, Singapore and so on.

### Out of Classroom

- I took part in a lot of after class activities, like the outdoor trip, ice skating gathering for exchange students and so on.
- I also travelled around by myself or with friends.
- I also did some volunteer work, like helping build the wooden bridge in the Beaman Park.

### Overall Sharing

- I really enjoyed the exchange. I experienced a new culture, met a lot of new friends, learned much knowledge, visited many beautiful places, took part in many exciting activities and so on.
- Don't be shy to ask people around for help when you come across difficulty there, like your classmates, your professors, or