

---

## **My Unforgettable Study Trip in University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

*DONG Tianlai*

*BEngECE, Yr-2*

### **Just Arrived...**

I arrived at campus at night. I had no idea where my dorm was but the driver of the bus was very kind and told me the way.

I wanted to have something to eat and asked the floor mate for help. He was a nice local student and provided me some recommendations. By the way, it was not safe to go out alone at night in the U.S.

I waited for the traffic lights for a long time until I realized that I needed to push a button to cross the street.

### **Orientation**

I joined the orientation and it gave me a first impression about the university life there. I also joined some activities organized by different student societies, it helped me know the campus, adapt to the new life and make new friends.

### **My Place**

I lived in the student dormitory. There were 60 students on my floor. Most students were local students so that I could chat with them to know more about local culture. It was safe there but we had to watch our own belongings. My roommate lost his laptop with the door unlocked.

### **My First Class**

My first class was a lecture. There were about 50 students in my class. The lecturer did not use Power Point. Instead, she wrote key points and examples on the blackboard and student had to organize notes by themselves. She delivered the course content really fast but it was well organized.

### **People I Met**

It was easy to make friends with American students but hard to develop communications. There are mainly two reasons. The first reason is language barrier. I could only chat with them on simple topics. The second reason is cultural difference and it might cause

misunderstanding sometimes.

### **Out of Classroom**

Just like at CityU, there are various student societies at UIUC. Students are free to choose whatever societies they want. For international students, there are also some special organizations.

They will organize some activities such as BBQ gathering, American cultural class and so on. However, some activities are mainly for religion purpose and the response of the activity is not good as expected.

At UIUC, exchange students cannot apply for internship but they have opportunities to do voluntary work. Interested students can ask associated student societies for details.

### **Money**

Totally, I spent about 7,000 U.S. dollars (excluding airline tickets). If I did not travel around America, I would only spend about 3,000 dollars. Travelling plan should be done as early as possible so that the airplane tickets could be booked as a relatively low price. Normally, hotels in America provide double rooms and triple rooms so travelling with friends would save a lot of money.

### **Goodbye**

I could not believe that the exchange program ended so quickly. A few days before my leaving, I said goodbye to some friends and we exchanged gifts. One of them told me that he admired me a lot and he could not imagine how it would be if he lived in a foreign country. He said I was really brave.

I also said goodbye to my professors. The professor teaching ethics said he would remember me for a long time.

The most rewarding part of my exchange experience is that I know more about American culture so that I can become more understanding. Furthermore, I know that it is not easy to live in a foreign country and learn to be more independent.

Sometimes, I have to compete with local students on writing skills. Although a big difference in standard was found, I felt the gradual progress. And travelling in a foreign city needs us to plan a lot of things, which is quite challenging.

---

### Home Sweet Home

After my return, I know more about the importance of independent learning. I feel more confident to solve unexpected difficulties since I have already learned to be more independent.

### Sharing and Overall Rating

Apart from cultural difference, there are also other things requiring my adaptation — different food, different transportation regulations, and even different hair style. After experiencing it, one will complain life less and appreciate it more.

If 5 is the top rating, I would give 4.



## My Exchange Experience in Tampere University of Technology

*NG Pui Yee,  
BEngECE, Yr-2*

### Just Arrived...

I joined the summer school hosted in UTA (University of Tampere). I had to arrive there on 1st August 2011. Because of the earlier arrival, Tutor helped me collect the key for my room. But I had to go there on my own. This was the first time to take a bus with the heavy luggage in Finland. I was worried but the Finns were very helpful. They told me which stop I should get off. When you go to Finland, You may feel that they are not friendly. In fact, they are shy. Don't be afraid to ask them. They are really helpful.

### Orientation

I joined the orientation offered by my host institution. It was like a show and the atmosphere was relaxing. We all enjoyed the orientation. After that, we met our schoolmates from different countries. Also, the orientation had a school tour that introduced the facilities of TUT which helped familiarize us with the environment of the university.

### My Place

In Finland, no universities will provide you with dormitory. TOAS can provide accommodation. I lived in Paawala. And this is my room and my flat. There are 2 rooms, one kitchen and washroom in one flat. I lived in a shared room.

### My First Class

The course in TUT are conducted in Finnish and English. Not too many local students take the English course. I cannot meet many local students during the course. Most of my classmates are international students who take the master course.

The course here is different from the CityU. The class usually starts at every 20 minutes of each hour sharply. The classes in TUT start every 15 minutes of each hour although the time shown on timetable start each hour sharply.

### People I Met

I met many friends in Summer school. They are from Korean,