
My Valuable Exchange Experience in University of Maryland, College Park, US

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My Blog

Welcome to be an exchange student in the east coast of USA where you can meet new friends, travel to New York in five hours and enjoy the snow in winter...

Just Arrived...

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I landed at Washington Dulles Airport in Virginia. The sky was so blue and the weather seemed promising. Struggling with my huge luggage, I took a bus to downtown DC and changed to the underground to the University of Maryland (UMD). It was so cold in Maryland. Shivering in my coat, I finally managed to get to my living place with the help of an UMD student. The Residence assistant was kind and helpful, and I settled down without much difficulty. The first day was tough, but the warmth from people there raised the temperature.

Orientation

I joined nearly all the orientation sessions offered by UMD, which turned out to be extremely worthy. There were different events at the orientation and they covered nearly all aspects, most of which seemed to be trivial at first, like adjusting to American culture and US classroom culture. However, they proved their usefulness later. What is more, international students met each other at the orientation, so it was the best time to make friends who were also excited about coming to America and with whom I could plan the trip during Spring Break.

My Place

Well, I applied for a double room but UMD offered me a single room. The room was large enough for me to live, but the heater did not work well, so it was quite freezing inside. And the worst thing about that was it was hard for me to get out of my bed in the morning. The room was equipped with a bed, a desk, a chair, a closet and a cabinet. And there was one huge bathroom on each floor. I felt quite safe in my room for the security of the whole

building was guaranteed by an electronic system and I needed an actual key to get into my room.

My First Class

Teaching style was the same as the one at CityU, so there was nothing spectacular to talk about. But I have to say the coursework was much more intense at Maryland. Two lectures per week with no tutorials means that I had to listen more carefully and read reference books, for if I did not catch up in one lecture, I would fall behind soon. The professors there were nice and ready to answer any questions I had and they were considerate. If some students asked him or her to extend the deadline of assignments, the professor usually granted it.

People I Met

Local students I met there were kind and warm-hearted. They helped me when I had problems with lectures and they shared past papers with me so that I could have focuses in my revision. American students were hardworking and eager to ask questions and challenge professors – this also means they were actively participating. Studying side by side with them gave me a completely different experience, which was very audacious and bold.

International students I hung out with were always ready to embrace new experiences. They enlarged their contact with American culture to the maximum and got the real taste of Uncle Sam. Being together with them helped me adjust to American culture.

Out of Classroom

It is widely known that Americans fancy basketball games, so students can always watch university basketball games at UMD for free. And the host university particularly organized some activities for exchange students, like tours to New York, Baltimore and Annapolis.

There were volunteer and internship opportunities for exchange students. UMD holds activities every now and then, like the UMD Day and invites students to become volunteers. I had a friend from the Netherlands learning physics at UMD and she got an internship from her professor for her excellence in class.

Money

I did not have issues with money during my whole stay there. That was probably because I paid for the rent and dining plan beforehand by credit card, so I only needed to worry about transportation and some other fees. I did not travel a lot due to the terrible weather in winter and I did not do much shopping for I had little space left in my suitcase. So, my finance was totally under control and I had cash left when I said goodbye to the US.

Goodbye

It was so hard for me to say goodbye to all the friends when I left, for I knew I would not be able to see most of them for quite a long time. I made friends with international students, so after that exchange semester, everyone would scatter around the globe. I was upset for some time, but with the help of modern technology, I was still able to talk to them and read their updates. The most rewarding part of my exchange experience was the good time I spent with my friends there and that memory is irreplaceable. The most challenging part was getting into the social circle of westerners at first for westerners tended to make friends with their own kind.

Home Sweet Home

After the exchange period, I moved to London for my internship, so I did not return home until the end of August. Seven months in the western world has changed me a lot. I speak my mind more often and seldom care about “saving face”, which is the culture in China. And I have become more independent after living on my own. I felt so grateful when my mom prepared a meal for me because I finally know the hardship of cooking every day. For studies, I think I will never put off till tomorrow what I can finish today.

Sharing

University of Maryland, College Park is a very good university and you will enjoy your stay there, but do not choose too many courses. 4 major courses for the whole semester are enough if you are a junior, because the coursework is heavy. Try Ultra-mobile if you want to buy a sim card, which offers deals for calling Asian countries. And do not be shy. Live your life to the optimum!

Overall Rating

4 (5 being the most satisfied)

I am satisfied with my exchange experience, for it was unique and brought happiness in my life. But if I had another chance, I would have chosen somewhere warmer, because for a south bird like me, snowing for months is hard to adjust to and accept.

