

International Students Exchange Program Report

The Exchange Program has been an amazing experience of exchanging culture, knowledge and friendship with students from all around the world. I was selected to study in Victoria University (VU) at Melbourne, Australia for one semester from February to June 2016. I am doing Bachelor in Commerce, majoring in Public Administration and Human Resource Management and Employment Relation.

Preparation for exchange

Planning to leave for Australia for five months sounds exciting but to pack was a challenge. Since I did not have any laptop nor school materials, I packed only my clothes. I firstly checked the weather season in Melbourne and found it is last month of warm season approaching spring and I just pack warm wear. I arranged a family/relative of mine to pick me up from the airport and also they will be taking care of me for the whole semester. This helped me to save up for the whole semester of the accommodation and meal expenses. However, my relative in Sydney helped me financially, setting up my account at Commonwealth bank (highly recommend) for easy transactions and purchases.

During Exchange

Upon arriving in Melbourne, I wasn't greeted by the relative that I arranged to live with for the semester, however, my colleague who join me for exchange, Annabelle, dropped me off to my other cousin's house. I, then moved and stay with my other cousin who lives in the city and it was convenient for me to travel to school and town too. The living expenses in Australia is totally different from Fiji as accommodation is paid weekly approximately 300 the cheapest to find.

First time on campus was on the 29th Feb as it was orientation day for all exchange students at Victoria, including those who are doing their Masters and PhD. I get to meet a lot of students from other places of the world, like Germany, Mexico, USA and Italy. First week of March, school starts, my tutors are all PhD graduates, the way they taught us in class is open conversation and on the other class is training, where students get to stand up in front and explain what has been taught in class from the previous weeks. I would say, this school has been upgraded with technology, as most of the classrooms have installed screens on the wall in every dimensions so that students can view from different corner of the classroom of what the tutor is presenting and also, 2 desktop computers available on all desk in the room for student's easy access online during class.

Apart from classroom work, I get to enjoy living in Australia with my friends. Since I lived closer to Melbourne University, I always join some students there for sharing the word of God and also join them for Easter Camp at Camp Oasis up near Evelyn Mountain. I also get to join the VUISA (Victoria University International Student Association) club and go on their tours and fun activities, such as visiting the Chocolate factory, Healesville Zoo and Winery Tour. Not only VUISA has tours but other clubs too on campus such as SMILE – hosted a tour to Enchanted garden and Zipline after at the same area. I would highly recommend joining different clubs on campus as it saves a few bucks on your wallet from going on your own. Facebook has been a great tool during Vic Uni, because it's the form of communication I get to discuss group work and also to update with the social events in Melbourne, where I find the International Student Office in town and their latest activity visiting the Parliament for FREE. This tour helped me so much to appreciate the culture of Australia and even learn about the history of Victoria (Queen Victoria era) that will help me in my career.

In April, all exchange students at VU were asked to host an Exchange Fair at Footscray Campus, on the same day it was known as culture exchange day. Since my colleague from Fiji had exam on same

day, I went to represent USP Fiji. I get to market out USP through explaining the courses available, the culture, a general background of the school and also giving students flyers about USP. It was an amazing day as I get to meet a friend from Taiwan who sat on my left and many Germans sat on my right.

Reflection After Exchange

What I have learned from this exchange program is to be more effective and efficient in research. I learned to be accurate with my research and to be more precise with the information I have and to make use of the academic advisors as much as I can. Also I am so thankful for VU staff for building a closer relationship with students where it is easy for us students to approach to when we are down or facing any problems with our assignments and if when need help or tips for the exam, they reply in an hour even if it's weekend or a late night email. They also open their doors for us even if it is not consultation hours, they make sure that we understand what they taught and to encourage us to do better to pass the unit.

The challenges I've faced is the traveling time, sometimes the bus gets in early and sometimes it comes very late to the bus stop I'm catching my bus. Not only that but the weather can kill the mood of the day, since Melbourne is known for 4 season a day, in the morning it will rain and then afternoon it will be very hot and then it will be cold, it changes and it can delay your work for the day. Also, group work. I find it hard to meet with my group for discussion as all of them are working and wouldn't have extra time for group meet up.

What I wish I knew before I left is, confirmation of where to live, the culture of the place, do's and the don'ts of living in Australia. Not only that but I wish I knew the textbook I need for my courses as they were also available and cheaper at USP Book centre.

A words of wisdom for all students, it's time to step out of your comfort zone. Try going for exchange program as it is lesson learned and challenging journey for students to exchange knowledge, culture and skills from other countries especially us growing up in the South Pacific Islands. As quoted online, Good things come to those who Believe, Better things come to those who are Patient and the best Things come to those who Don't Give up. You will achieve great things when you keep trying and never give up. All the best and G'day Mate!

University campus – Exchange Fair on campus – VU Footscray Campus, beside me are my friends from Taiwan and after her are exchange students who were studying in Japan and Korea.



Closest city or town centre – this is one of Melbourne’s most famous tourist sites – Flinders Street Station also known as people’s meet up place ‘Under the Clock’



Fun or unique activities – On my right (in red jacket) is the President for VUISA – Sebastian with VU international students at Healesville Zoo (our 2nd stop) from our Yarra valley Tour!



Me and my fellow student life members – camping at Oasis Christian Camp, Lilydale.



A photo of you or roommate – my first friend in class is Asha Angelina, I'm so glad to be her friend. My tutor was so happy too to see me chatting with her and said 'She's one amazing student – and so smart' I'm grateful and so thankful for her help at our Entrepreneurship and Innovation unit.



I'm so grateful for my cousins here who have been catering for me during my study at VU Melbourne, not only I stay at her home but she also encourage me when I'm struggling in school and other situations in life. I appreciate you cousin Vei and Thank you Lei for life lesson and caring heart. I did balance my life in school, family and church.

