

Fall | 2016



Miami University Exchange Report

Li Man Kwan

BBA in Information Systems and Management (Year 3)

Monthly Activity Log

August

I arrived in the United States on 14th Aug and lived in the Doubletree Hotel for two nights. On 16th Aug, the school arranged a shuttle bus to bring the students in the Doubletree Hotel to go to Miami University. After we settled down, the orientation activities started on 17th Aug and it lasted for almost two weeks. There were various activities for exchange students and freshmen to know more about the campus and make new friends. The activities included Welcome session, Campus tour, iPOL small group meeting, picnic, uptown dinner, Dragon Boat Festival, Kenwood Mall shopping trip, ice skating, bowling, Mega Fair, President's Reception, etc. As I was an exchange student, some of them were compulsory while the others were not. Thus, I joined some of them to make friends from around the world and spent a week on travelling to the West Coast – Las Vegas, Los Angeles and the Grand Canyon.

September

School began on 29th Aug. In the first few weeks of school, the workload was not that much and the atmosphere among the campus was relaxing. So I got plenty of time to hang out and communicate with my new Korean and German friends. I felt really great to share different my culture with friends from other countries. I remembered once when I knew that German girls never use paper masks, I gave two paper masks to two German neighbors to have a try. They found it very funny and we took many interesting photos. We also taught each other our native languages. That cultural exchange was an amazing experience. In September, there was also a Mega Fair in which you can get to know different clubs and societies. You can choose to join several of them. I went there with my Korean friends and signed up for multiple clubs too!

October

The workload has increased quite a bit in October because there are two midterm exams in most of my courses. One of them is in October and another one is in November. At the beginning of October, there was a Miami ice hockey competition.

The atmosphere was really good that you can see how the Miami students support the Miami Sports team crazily. All the students in Miami have strong sense of belonging towards Miami. What's more, since I joined the global buddy program, the international office matched me with a local student and prepared a set of activities for us. One of the activities was to bring us to a farm. We shared our culture and talked much about our own countries. I had some great time there. Moreover, there was a fall break in October. Therefore, I spent my break on travelling to Canada to meet my friends there. I went to Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto and the Niagara Fall. Canada was a really chill country. I love it so much. In the mid-October, I participated in the color run. It was really fun. At the end of October, everyone was celebrating the Halloween. The American dressed beautifully to attend parties and decorated their rooms very well. I also went to a theme park in the King's Island where it was in Halloween theme and attended a Halloween party.

November

The workload in November became even more. I had many projects to work on and I had to study for many quizzes as well as the second midterm exams. That was quite stressed to me because I did not expect the workload would be that much in my exchange journey. However, I still skipped several classes and went to Canada again. This time, I went to Ottawa and Toronto. The weather was getting very cold at that time. If I do not go travelling, I usually go to some cities near Miami University with my friends. I was lucky enough to make friends with people who could drive because if you don't get a car, you can seldom go out, for there was no public transport around Miami University. I went to Kentucky, Hamilton and Cincinnati during the weekends. In the late November, it came to the Thanksgiving break. The American celebrated it a lot. The purpose of the Thanksgiving break is to let people stop working, take a break and think about what is thankful in your life. That was really meaningful. During the Thanksgiving break; I went to New York and Boston with some American, Chinese and Korean. Since I went there with some local American, they brought me to good spots. It was really a brand new experience for me to travel with foreigners. I had a wonderful trip with them.

December

That was a month full of project presentations and examinations. Everyone in Miami worked hard and had many project meetings. I also got three projects to work on. So I was very busy in the first week of December. It was really cold in December that it sometimes reached -20 degree Celsius. The most memorable thing was I could see snowing before I go back to Hong Kong! That was my first time to see snowing. I was very excited and built a big snowman together with my friends. Also, I went to the Cincinnati Zoo to watch the Christmas lights. When it comes to December, the atmosphere was really good because the lights, snow and decorations were everywhere. That was amazingly beautiful. After I finished the examinations, I left Miami University. I miss it very much.

General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

Exchange students to the US have to apply for J-1 Visa. Before applying the visa, you have to prepare your financial documents. Besides, Miami will send you the DS-2019 and the admission letter for application use. It takes about one month to process the application. Thus, make sure you don't apply the visa at the last minute. Also, remember to keep the DS-2019 form well because you will need to show it when entering the US.

2) Orientation activities

The orientation week started 2 weeks before the semester starts. As what I have mentioned above, there were various activities for exchange students and freshmen to know more about the campus and make new friends. The activities included Welcome session, Campus tour, iPOL small group meeting, picnic, uptown dinner, Dragon Boat Festival, Kenwood Mall shopping trip, ice skating, bowling, Mega Fair, President's Reception, etc.

3) International Services & Activities

The ISSS (International Student and Scholar Services) is responsible for handling

all the matters related to international students. Thus, whenever you have any enquiries, you can go to the office to seek help. Besides this, the ISSS will organize different programs and activities. Global buddy is one of the programs. The office will match you with another local American and arrange a set of activities for you to join. Also, they often offer some cheap bus trips for international students to go to different places.

4) **Accommodations**

I lived on campus – Swing Hall. All the exchange students are required to live on campus. But the cost of accommodation is really expensive. It is about USD 3075, which is a double of that of off-campus housing. Some halls on campus are new halls while the others can have approximately 100 years of history. So it is better to choose the one suitable for you carefully.

5) **Courses Registration**

Miami University will provide detailed instructions through email to tell you how to register for courses. You have to fill in an online form to register for courses before you go to Miami. The registration results will be announced about one month after you submit the form. Be careful about the credit transfer! You can look through the database of course equivalency to see the previous assessed courses. You may also need to assess the courses that are not in the database. As my majors are Information Systems and Management, I took the following courses:

- ISA 245: Database Systems
- ISA 301: Data Communication in Business
- ISA 387: Designing Business Systems
- ART 286: China, Korea, Japan
- PSY 111: Introduction to Psychology

6) **Teaching & Assessment Methods**

The study atmosphere is much more interactive in Miami when compared to universities in Hong Kong. The American students do not hesitate to raise or answer questions. They are always active to express opinions. Regarding

assignments and exams, I think studying in the US could be busier than studying in Hong Kong because the school would like you to keep learning throughout the whole semester. They arrange more quizzes, midterm exams and assignments.

7) **Sports & recreation Facilities**

There are sufficient facilities in Miami University. You can find the Rec Center and Goggin Ice Center on campus. In the Rec center, you can go to the gym and swimming for free. In the Goggin Ice Center, you can do ice-skating too. Besides, there are many places for you to do picnic and hiking.

8) **Cost/Expenses (in USD)**

Accommodation: \$3075

Pre-semester housing: \$330

Meal Plan: \$1900

Flight tickets (to and from Hong Kong): \$1900

Visa + SEVIS fee: 350

2 nights in Doubletree Hotel before Miami shuttle came: \$125

Other trivial compulsory fee: \$200

Living expenses: \$1500

Shopping: \$1000

Travelling: 2500

Total: \$12580

Note that I worked for a professor in the information systems department and the hourly wage was \$8.1. So I actually earned some money to cover my high expense :P

9) **Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities**

As what I have mentioned above, there was a Mega fair arranged in September. All the social clubs will have booths in the Mega Fair. You can simply walk around the Mega Fair and get to know the information of them. You can join multiple of them. Also, the ISSS will organize different activities, such as

NationaliTea and Global Buddy Program. You can make friends through all these opportunities.

10) **Health & Safety**

There is a health center on campus in which you can accept clinical service there. However, the fee of clinical service is extremely expensive. I used it once and it costs me USD 297. Thus, I suggest bringing your own medicine or buying medicine in the Pharmacy shops in Oxford. On the other hand, Oxford is a relatively safe city when compared to other cities in the US. However, there are still some crimes. So, never go out alone at late night, as there are quite a lot of drunk guys after parties.

11) **Food**

Exchange students are required to purchase a meal plan. I purchased the minimum one but it still had 225 buffet meals in my plan. It cost USD 1900, which is quite expensive. What's more, you can never finish 225 meals throughout a semester. And it was non-refundable. You can also try the food in the uptown that is just next to Miami University. There are various kinds of food there. But the price of the food was not cheap.

12) **Transportation**

There was no public transportation connecting Miami University to the nearest cities. If you want to go to the airport or go to other places, you may need to call a taxi or go with friends who have a car. However, there are school shuttle buses connecting places inside Miami University. Also, some shuttle buses go to uptown and the Walmart nearby.

13) **Climate**

In August and September, it was hot but not that humid like Hong Kong. So I felt quite comfortable. Actually it was a bit cool at night. Also, the sunset was at around 8pm in summer. So you may feel you have more time in a day. In October, it got cooler gradually and it rained quite a lot. You may see the maple trees turning red. It was really beautiful. In November, it was very cold.

Sometimes it reached 0 degree Celsius. The sunset time became at around 5pm. You feel you have a short day. In December, it kept getting colder and it snowed! The snowing scene in Miami University was wonderful.

14) Communication

I always used mobile services during my exchange. I used AT&T as my carrier. The plan cost USD 48 per month. The Internet was stable and it offered unlimited calls and texts.

15) Cautionary measures

For safety reasons, try not to go out at late night as there are many drunk guys and they may do crazy things. Also, pay attention to the Miami emails because it tells you all the alert news immediately.

16) Other notes

I suggest to bring a small suitcase that can be used for carry-on baggage because it costs USD 25 for checked baggage for most airlines if you want to travel within the US or to Canada.

Items to Bring and Contacts

- Adapters
- Small suitcase (for carry-on baggage)
- Visa documents and passport
- Cash and cards
- Mobile phone
- Laptop
- Camera
- Personal medicine
- Moisturizing lotion
- Umbrella
- Clothes, especially a thick jacket!

If you want to know more about my exchange experiences or my travelling schedule, feel free to get my contact through the SBM by emailing bmugexch@ust.hk! I hope you can have memorable exchange experiences too. 😊

