

EXCHANGE REPORT
@ BOSTON COLLEGE

2016 FALL SEMESTER / XIAOYI HUANG



Part 1 Monthly Activity Log

August:

I arrived at Boston three days before Orientation. I settled down in a hotel at Chinatown and had a brief view of Boston in that three days. I checked Downtown Crossing, Newbury Street, North End (Little Italy), Boston Commons, and Museum of Fine Arts by my own. On the day before I checked in at Boston College and prepared myself with beddings and daily essentials.

The Orientation was basically very similar to freshman orientation I had at HKUST. A group of international assistants showed me around the campus, and provided me with tips of how to get around BC. They were very friendly helping with Sim card and bank accounts. In terms of choosing courses, Office of International Programs did their best to adjust the courses for me.

September:

On the first weekend I went to NYC with my best friend. We visited Time Square, Wall Street, NYU, MoMA, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and had dinner with some high school classmates. It takes 4 hours from Boston to NYC by bus and round-trip price can range from \$80 to \$100. You can choose set off from Riverside (at the end of Green D line), or South Station (Boston Downtown).

Apart from attending school, I also watched a baseball game between NY Yankee and Boston Red Sox. Yankee and Red Sox were both the best-known baseball team in United States, and the very enemy of each other. The game was very excited, and it was lucky that a famous baseball star Big Papi also attended the game that night. Fans were crazily passionate about Red Sox, and I was very impressed by that. If there were chance to see another game of Red Sox, I would definitely go again.

October:

Starting from October, students at Boston College began midterm periods. Usually for a typical Business school course, there would be two or even three midterms ahead. I took four courses: business law, financial statement analysis, investment and money & banking, and in total I had 8 midterms, 6 case write ups, 2 projects and 1 presentation. I would say the workload was similar to UST but BC emphasize more on participation.

We had fall break in the middle of October. Two of my friends from Brown University rent a car, and drove me to Walden Pond. It was a peaceful and beautiful place and I enjoyed it a lot. We also took the chance to explore Korean town in Boston, and tasted Korean Cuisine.

November:

It became colder and colder from November, and the highlight of November was Thanksgiving holiday. My friends at UST who were also on exchange in the United States came to visit me, and we made thanksgiving dinner together. During the thanksgiving holiday, we went to the Sloan Management School of MIT, and Back Bay area (similar to Central of Hong Kong) of Boston together.

November was the music month for me. With a friend from Bentley, I went to the live of the Fray (an alternative Britpop band). I also attended two classical music concerts of Boston Symphony Orchestra, which featured Brahms and Dvorak separately.

December:

I was very busy with final projects and presentation in the beginning of December. Fortunately, my group mates were rather helpful and enthusiastic

about our projects. Following were finals and concluding lectures for every course.

During the middle of December, I went to Chicago with my friend. We explored the Loop area, fascinated by the Millennium, Chicago Art Institute and Navy Pier. I experienced the most fabulous snow night in the restaurant of Hancock Tower. Wandering along the Magnificent Mile, we took a lot of beautiful pictures. The last day in Chicago we went to University of Chicago. As an economics student, definitely I spent most of time in the building for Department of Economics. Unfortunately, we were required to leave the dorm immediately so I flew back to China directly. Everything was wrap up and I really want to go back to Boston again one day!

Part 2 General Questions

1) Visa procedures:

Boston college issued F1 visa for exchange students. For visa application, you can follow HK Government website; around 200 USD is required for F1 visa. If you choose to go in fall semester, your student status will be valid from AUG to DEC. Then you are allowed to stay in USA for 60 days (grace period) to travel around. Before you leave Hong Kong, US embassy will issue an I-20 form for you. Keep the form with you during your departure as it will be used in various occasions.

2) Orientation

If you choose to exchange as Boston College in Fall semester, there should be an official orientation which is compulsory. You will meet International Assistants (similar to exchange buddies), and they would be very nice and helpful.

3) International services and activities

OIP and OISS are two offices designed to help international students to settle down at Boston College. They are helpful in terms of choosing courses, visa issues.

4) Accommodations

There were several types of dorms on campus/ off campus in Boston College. I was assigned to “apartment type” and it was located at 2000 Commonwealth Avenue. It usually took me 20 min to walk up to middle campus, and there was also shuttle along Commonwealth Avenue for BC kids. An App named Ride was very useful which helped to track all the shuttles and provide timetables.

5) Course Registration

Boston College will contact exchange students several month before arrival, and ask for a list of courses preferred by students. You can refer to BC agora (their “my portal”) and find any courses you are interested in. Please also pay attention to the mapping database in the website of HKUST and plan for credit transfer ahead of time.

6) Teaching and assessment methods

Overall the grading system was very similar to that of HKUST, but the workload, I would say, might be even greater. BC emphasizes more on projects and participations and usually there would be lots of midterms.

7) Sports and Recreational facilities

BC is very famous for sports and make sure you check out their great gyms. \$150 was required to pay to get registered, but the compulsory insurance you bought would help to reimburse the \$150.

8) Financing and Banking

Personally I recommend bringing a little cash and a visa/mastercard with you when you arrive. Then during orientation, representatives from Bank of America will help exchange students open an account. After opening that account, your family can easily transfer money to the account. A debit card is what you need, and remember to close your account at any BOA branch before you leave this country. Otherwise you need to maintain a balance to avoid account management fee.

Hall fees, meal plans, and other fees can be paid by your BOA card or a visa/master card.

9) Social Clubs and networking opportunities

BC is very famous for networking in terms of recruitment. It was a pity that F1 status didn't allow an internship in US, but you can definitely reach out to professors and alumni to get any help. Personally recommendation would be professor Mike Barry, he would be a best choice if you want to tailor your CV/ cover letter or seek tips of interview process.

10) Health and Safety

An insurance required by the state government can cover most of your bills. Make sure check your immunization status before exchange, and get necessary vaccines in U.S. in case you can not complete immunization requirements

before your exchange. The insurance will cover your vaccines, and you need to go to Walgreens in Newton Center by T (Green D line) to get your vaccines.

11) Food

Frankly I won't speak highly of canteens in BC. Therefore, if you are not required to buy a meal plan, just do not. Usually we go to 3 places on campus to eat: Lower campus canteen, middle campus canteen, and hillside café. The New England Classics sandwich at hillside café would be a smart choice.

Most of time I cook by myself in the apartment. Several places I did grocery shopping includes: Wholefoods (organic food supermarket, the nearest one would be at Washington Station on Green B line), Chinatown (where you can find several Chinese supermarket and just get everything you need), and Super 88 (a Hong Kong Supermarket located at Brighton Avenue station on Green B line).

Several places I would recommend to find foods: Chinatown, Newbury Street, and Harvard Avenue. Asian foods were much better than American food for me.

12) Transportation

The train system (MBTA, nick name: T) in Boston was one of the oldest in US and it was not very developed. You can get a Charlie Card at any major station and charge money, then use it as an Octopus card for MTR.

For Taxi apps I would recommend Lyft, which is cheaper and more user friendly than Uber.

13) Climate

September (18 ~ 25 degrees)

October & November (5 ~ 15 degrees)

December (-10 ~ 0 degrees, and sometimes would be extremely cold, e.g. below -20 degrees after a storm)

14) Communication

I simply assigned for the monthly plan of AT&T with unlimited data, and you can check out other carriers as well.

15) Cautionary Methods

Although Boston is a rather safe city in U.S., don't go out alone during nights.

Part 3 Checklist

Passport, i-20, ID, immunization form, necessary medicines

Warm clothing, cap, sunglasses, sneakers, boots

You can get daily essentials, beddings, and stationary easily when you settle down. The Target and BBB at Fenway Part would be one-stop nice choice.

In terms of Shopping, check Newbury Street, Copley and Prudential and you can get every thing.

Part 4 Useful links

BC agora (similar to HKUST's my portal), Canvas, Groupon Boston, Yelp