

Exchange Report
University of Virginia, USA
McIntire School of Commerce

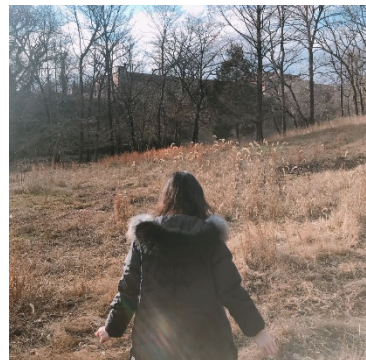


DONG Yu
BSc in Quantitative Finance, Year 3
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Part I Monthly Activity Log

January 2020

I arrived in Charlottesville in early January, I chose to fly directly to Charlottesville–Albemarle Airport (CHO) because of the convenience. After settling down in the residential hall, UVA Exchange Office and McIntire School of Commerce both held orientation to welcome exchange students. UVA campus is quite big and I toured around the campus to get familiar with the surrounding before my classes commenced. Besides being busy with my courses, I tried to get integrated into this place from the beginning by joining lots of activities. My residential hall offers many: I joined some such as the pancake making activity where I met many nice local students and made friends with them; I also joined the weekly event *The Week That Was*, in which students would gather together and talk about and express opinions and thoughts on current events (in terms of politics, culture, national emergency, etc.) going on in the world. UVA has a very strong humanistic atmosphere which I really enjoy. Since Virginia state is close to Washington DC, I went on a trip to DC by Amtrak in late January. Touring around the typical National Mall, I visited the White House, the National Museum of Art, National Air and Space Museum, and National Museum of African American History and Culture, and so on. I also went to Georgetown to enjoy the slow-paced culture, great food, and atmosphere of elegance.



February 2020

February came and I had many quizzes, assignments, and readings to go. Although it was busy during weekdays, students manage to go outside and take part in lots of extra curriculum activities on weekends. For me, I went to visit an art collection organized by my residential masters, they drove us to the off-campus gallery and there was UVA staff guided us to tour around and commented on artworks. UVA also held concerts throughout the year, I joined one, enjoying the music on a Friday night with a chill mood. Besides, I joined a UVA outdoor activities club which would organize outdoor events such as climbing, biking, hiking, and so on by different students each week. I also went on a sunset hiking with other students, we drove and climbed a long way to enjoy the quiet yet fascinating view on the mountain top, which was really unforgettable. Virginia has lots of mountains to explore, lots of beautiful scenery to visit. There were other cultural activities held on campus as well, such as Indian food night, conversazione which a famous US ambassador and other humanities professors were invited to give talks on recent world events...I am always concerned about the world issue and always curious about other cultures, UVA offers lots of opportunities for me to explore my interest and I really appreciate it.



March 2020

Our spring break landed in early to mid-March, everyone was reviewing midterm in advance and planning for the spring break trip. I traveled to Philadelphia in Pennsylvania state for a day, touring around the city to feel the vibe of the place. Then I flew to New Orleans and stayed there for 4 days. New Orleans is a quite special place in the US, with its unique charm, it is unlike any other place in this country. The food, building, and culture were very different from other cities, this place was filled up with music, dance, and carnival. I explored this place in depth, visiting the French Quarter, Oak Alley Plantation, and taking on a swamp tour, and enjoying its seafood in the meantime.



April 2020

Due to the coronavirus, UVA switched to online learning mode for the rest of the semester, everyone was quickly adjusting to the new learning mode.

May 2020

We have our online finals in early May. I was busy preparing for my exams.

Part II General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

UVA will mail the DS-2019 form to HKUST once the nomination is successful. UVA will provide guidance on online visa application, you will need a 5cm*5cm photo for the online application and you need to pay relevant fees for processing. You will need to make an appointment online for the embassy interview. Remember to bring your ID card, passport, DS-2019 form, SEVIS I-901 Payment Confirmation, and photo when visiting the embassy. The embassy will mail the visa to you afterward.

Orientation Activities

UVA will hold 2 orientation activities, one is held by UVA International Exchange Office, which all the exchange students would participate in, the other is held by UVA McIntire School of Commerce, which only the business students would attend. The orientation would introduce the university, the school, class enrollment, common practice and resources for students, etc. Also, exchange buddies will meet the students at the orientation and they will guide a tour in the Ross & Robertson Hall (McIntire School of Commerce main building).

International Services & Activities

There will be advisors addressing exchange students' questions and concerns such as course enrollment. They were really nice and helpful. UVA also has an exchange buddy program that assigns each student a buddy, it's recommended to get in touch with the buddy and ask questions. Besides, the International Center will host many activities each month, for example, cooking, language program, movie night...which is a good source for students to learn about other cultures. I would recommend subscribing to the International Center's email and check its website constantly.

Accommodations

There will be on-campus housing and off-campus housing option for exchange students, generally, exchange students would be offered a place for on-campus housing. I would recommend the International Residential College (IRC) for exchange students, IRC is a very nice community and there are many international students as well as local students. IRC will offer breakfast every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for students who have early classes, and it organizes many colorful and meaningful activities each week, for example, the staff will drive students to museums or take students to concerts; the IRC committee will organize pen pal program, pancake

making session, etc. Every Monday the principal would organize dinner gathering and every Tuesday there will be yoga class; and the aforementioned weekly event *The Week That Was*, where students could discuss current world issues. I really like IRC and I have made many international friends there, it feels like home to me.

Course Registration

UVA will pre-register some courses for McIntire School students, you will receive a list of courses available for pre-registration and you could choose some, the staff will help you pre-register, usually 3-4 courses according to your preference and availability. During the add-drop period, students could adjust their course list.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

The teaching and assessment methods are similar to HKUST, yet I think UVA would emphasize projects more. The grading criteria are usually absolute grading, it is a matter of you not others in the same course, as long as you work hard, your grades will be fine.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

UVA has gymnasiums, aquatic & fitness center, squash center, tennis court, etc. for fitness. Exchange students have free access to all these sports center. UVA IM-Rec Sports would organize lots of fitness activities.

Finance & Banking

I opened a bank account at the Bank of America and I also brought other credit cards for use. It's recommended to bring some cash since some shops only accept cash, small changes are needed to pay tips in restaurants.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

UVA will hold a Spring Activities Fair in late January which is a good opportunity to explore various clubs. UVA has a great number of clubs in a wide variety, such as academic & professional, sports, multicultural, political & advocacy, service, social & hobby, arts, etc. Residential halls will organize some activities in which you could meet and mingle with other students.

Health & Safety

UVA requires exchange students to enroll in health insurance and get certain vaccines. You could choose to enroll in the UVA Student Health Plan or choose to

waive the program by providing proof of enrollment into other health insurance plans offered by third parties that meet the coverage criteria set by UVA.

Food

UVA has 3 main dining halls and many food trucks, I enrolled in a meal plan since it is the most convenient to eat at school. UVA offers different types of meal plans and I would recommend enrolling in 50~100 meals if you don't cook very often. The University Corner has many restaurants, like Japanese Sushi, Thai restaurant, and Chinese restaurants. In general, the food is delicious in Charlottesville.

Transportation

I usually walk on campus even though the campus is quite large, but you could choose to take the UVA shuttle bus. Outside UVA, students usually take CAT (Charlottesville Area Transit) bus and UVA students enjoy free tickets. There is a Union State (30-min walk from campus) where you could take trains or buses to other cities.

Climate

It's quite cold in Charlottesville from January to early March, there will usually be snow in these months, the temperature is around 0 degree Celsius in January. In March and April, the temperature is higher.

Communication

I would recommend having one local SIM card, usually, students would choose among AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile. There is one AT&T store near school, or you could buy the SIM card online.

Cautionary measures

Try not to stay outside in the late night, if you happen to come back late, you can ask UVA police for help, UVA also provides safe rides for students. Note down UVA emergency contact numbers.

Part III Items to Bring

- Passport, DS-2019 Form, health requirement form
- Quilt, pillow, bed sheets
- Thick jacket, sweater, gloves, scarf, hat
- T-shirts, shorts
- Business suits (for presentation)
- Voltage converter
- Basic medicine
- Credit card, cash, some changes
- Stationery
- Laptop

Part IV Useful Links and Contact

- UVA SIS:
https://sisuva.admin.virginia.edu/psc/ihprd/UVSS/SA/s/WEBLIB_HCX_GN.H_SPRING_BOARD.FieldFormula.IScript_Main
- UVA Class Schedules: <https://louslist.org/>
- UVA Dining Services: <https://virginia.campusdish.com/>
- UVA Collab: <https://collab.its.virginia.edu/portal>
- UVA Blackboard: <https://blackboard.comm.virginia.edu/>
- UVA Student Insurance: <http://www.uvastudentinsurance.com/>
- UVA Housing: <https://housing.virginia.edu/>
- UVA Emergence Department: (434) 924-2231
- UVA Police Department: (434) 924-7166