

Exchange Report

University of California, Riverside



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Monthly Activity Log

January

I arrived at the campus only after a few days after the semester had started, as I wanted to complete my COVID-19 vaccine injection in Hong Kong. The first month of classes were online. As most students had their lectures at home, it was challenging making new friends besides roommates.

I started knowing people from Hong Kong Student Association there and went on a day trip with them in LA. We went to Santa Monica and some notable tourist spots in LA.



February

Studying at UC Riverside shouldn't be too hard as I have got two quarters to split the study load. With lower study intensity compared to HKUST, I started spending more time maintaining my physical and mental well-being with weight training and cooking.

My friends and I went to LA again to visit some other great sightseeing spots including the Griffith Observatory. If you (and your friends) do enjoy singing, visiting local karaoke bars is a great choice of entertainment.

The highlight of the month for me was visiting a live Lakers game. As an NBA (and a LeBron) fan, watching the game was like a dream come true to me. Despite the Lakers played a horrendous game and got blown out by a bottom-tier team.



March

The winter quarter ends in March, which also meant it was time to study (as a deadline fighter). After the quarter ended, my friends and I cooked together before going to New York.

My short visit to New York included some must-do, such as visiting the Statue of Liberty, Wall Street, and the American Museum of Natural History. Even if you are not interested in arts, I recommend sitting in a Broadway show and visiting the Museum of Modern Arts. These are places where even laymen like most of us could appreciate the effort and creative talent of top-tier performers/artists.



April

We continue to explore places around Riverside, this time we went to Irvine for some shopping as well as a fun ice-skate experience. I found Newport Beach more calming and astonishing than Santa Monica.



The student body in the school will occasionally organize large-scale activities. Great ones include a silent disco and a Spring Carnival with schools renting exciting amusement rides straight to the campus.

Another top activity on my bucket list - besides watching NBA - is attending an E-sport event. I was fortunate to connect with someone on Reddit (which could be risky), who bought an extra ticket and

was willing to bring me in for free. It was an exciting 5-game series where the 100 Thieves managed to pull out a reverse sweep (from down 0-2 to win 3-2) against a champion favorite: Team Liquid.



May

Visiting a country park should also be on your to-do list going to the states! While I don't know how to drive, I was fortunate enough to have a GBUS friend bringing me to Yellowstone. It is the first national park in the US. A marvelous park located across three states. You could find colorful hot springs and a huge collection of wildlife living in their natural habitat. We also visited the Grand Teton Park, a cool mountain rumored to inspire the design of Paramount Picture's logo.





June

The final month of the exchange was all about traveling once I completed my work early in the first week. I went to different places around Riverside and LA with my girlfriend coming from Hong Kong. Disneyland is our favorite. We find the immersive attraction based on Star Wars and the “World of Color” water laser show most memorable.



The final trip to San Francisco and San Jose with my friends marked the end of the short 5.5-month exchange. Besides tourist attractions in the city, we also got to visit another famous country park: Yosemite, where Apple got its wallpapers.



Studying at UC Riverside was unexpectedly life-changing, making great friends along the way. These 5.5 months will forever be one of the happiest periods in my life.



Items to Bring

It is convenient to buy all sorts of daily necessities in Riverside through groceries delivery (see “Food” for details) or through Amazon. All you need is things for the settling down in the first week:

- Passport/ID + DS-2019
- Documents to proof your visit as an exchange student (e.g. rental document, UCR’s welcome letter)
- Personal medicine
- Adaptor (US uses 110V instead of the 220V in HK) + extension units



- Tissue packs (these could be harder to find in US)
- Sim card for short term use
- (you don’t really need thick clothing even for Winter quarter)

Useful Links & Contacts

[Highly recommended] Hong Kong Student Association, this is where you can find great friends and a lot of help adapting to US. They host around 4-5 events every quarter.

[UCR HKSA \(@ucrhkasa\)](#) • [Instagram photos and videos](#)



HKSA's collaboration event with UC Irvine

International Students and Scholars Office <https://international.ucr.edu/students>

UCR Portal, similar to our student intranet <https://portal.ucr.edu/uPortal/>

Canvas, similar to what we have <https://canvas.ucr.edu/>

UCR Student Recreation Center, you will need an app to access the facilities

[Recreation](#) | [University of California, Riverside \(ucr.edu\)](#)

Reddit, there is where you find advice for different sorts of issues [UC Riverside](#) | [Reddit](#)

Tips going to UCR

Visa Procedures

The visa application process would take quite a bit of waiting time. You should beware of an email from UC Riverside requesting you to initiate DS-2019 request, which requires you to submit your financial status. Just submit the documents asap so the documents could be mailed to Hong Kong. While you wait for the documents, make sure you secure a meeting with the US consulate for a visa interview.

Orientation Activities

There was an online orientation event (due to COVID), but it clashed with my HKUST final exam. I believe in-person event will return and it will be helpful.

International Services & Activities

The International Students and Scholars Office hosts regular event for international students, I have also made a few friends during the events. They can be the first contact point if you have any questions about anything UCR-related.

Accommodations

You should start this early! While it is easier to apply for housing since you are an exchange student (priority given), the wait time is still long and it will add unnecessary stress if you start late. There are currently 2 main ways of applying to campus apartment (don't apply to residence halls because they are mainly for freshmen and are less comfortable): through UCR housing service and apply directly for North District (another campus apartment). You should apply for both to get a better chance of securing your housing.

Glen Mor and North District are the best options available.

Courses Registration

You will be assigned to a academic advisor. For most courses, you will register the courses through emailing the advisor. For my case, my advisor took ages to reply to my email, so you should follow up frequently to make sure you get enrolled. (cc-ing international office and HKUST staff would motivate the staff to reply) Fortunately, for most business courses, there are slots reserved for exchange students so it is likely for you to get whatever business course you need.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

It depends on the lecturer/professor. It won't be too different from what we have at HKUST. I would say if you get 3-4 courses per quarter, there's nothing to worry about in terms of studying. You can spend more time exploring and having fun.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

There are 24/7 gym facilities for most campus apartments. For me, I love the UCR Student Recreation Center, you get exposure to a comprehensive set of equipment and support services. (it is at least 10x the size of UST gym)

Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

I didn't setup a local bank account there because I used an HSBC debit card that supports global currencies. You can do almost everything with a debit card so I didn't need a local account. You should hold some cash so you can pay your friends after events. (The US version of Payme are mainly Zelle and Venmo, but they require local bank accounts to function)

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

I highly recommend joining the Hong Kong Student Association. Otherwise, there are also many interest-based clubs available.

Health & Safety

There's a health center for you to make free medical appointments as long as you have the UC SHIP. The campus is overall very safe with many streetlamps and a police station nearby, there shouldn't be a lot to worry about. If you are travelling alone far away from campus during night time, however, you can consider getting a pepper spray.

Food

I prefer to save by cooking (US food = expensive). I recommend getting groceries by Instacart – basically Foodpanda/Deliveroo for groceries. It saves you a lot of time especially if you don't have a car.

There are also quite a few dining options available if you prefer to save some time:

- Campus offerings: buffet available at Glasgow (they offer all-you-can-eat campus food, not exactly good food)
- Nearby restaurants: There's quite a few places to go in the University Village, 10-20 minutes walk away from the apartments. At the point of writing this report, I recommend going to the HK BBQ house, Ramen Okawari and Kimchichanga. There are also two boba places.
- Delivery: There's a lot of option with Doordash or Uber Eats(the US version of Foodpanda/Deliveroo)

Transportation

UCR students can get a bus pass for free bus rides. If you are travelling (which you should haha), it is recommended to have someone renting a car and drive. (20%-50% of the cost of uber/lyft)

Climate

It is quite dry there, I had to buy a humidifier. Even during winter, it is only cold after sunset (~10°C). It could get to 35-38°C in May and June. You probably want more short sleeves in general.

Communication

If your phone supports e-sim, I know there are many cheap yet powerful options available. Unfortunately, my phone doesn't have it so I had to buy a 3GB plan (\$15 per month) at a T-Mobile store in the university village.

Cautionary measures

There are theft around the campus but there are no reports on significant safety concerns. You should keep your items safe with locks and take pepper spray if you are worried. The overall safety level in campus is very high.