



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Host University</b>                 | University of Richmond           |
| <b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b> | 2019 Semester 2, 2020 Semester 1 |
| <b>Otago degree(s)</b>                 | BSc                              |
| <b>Major(s)</b>                        | Economics, Minor in Accounting   |

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

| <b>Course title</b>                   | <b>Language of instruction</b> | <b>Otago equivalent</b> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Introductory Econometrics             | English                        |                         |
| Accounting Information Systems        | English                        |                         |
| Intermediate Financial Accounting II  | English                        |                         |
| International Trade                   | English                        |                         |
| Environmental Economics               | English                        |                         |
| Forecasting and Time Series Analysis  | English                        |                         |
| Advanced International Macroeconomics | English                        |                         |
| Cost and Managerial Accounting        | English                        |                         |
|                                       |                                |                         |

Total Otago credits gained:  54 points  72 points  108 points  \_\_\_\_\_

Any comments about these papers?

It can be very confusing initially when having to select them online and stressful as the classes are capped. A lot of the courses seemed very daunting when I read the outline but then ended up being the best classes. I highly recommend the Forecasting and Time Series Analysis course as it was super hands-on and teaches you a lot about what you would be doing in an economics job. International Trade was another course I loved because it has a really broad scope and focusses on comparing real life situations to theoretical models.

How did the academic experience/workload/style of teaching differ from Otago?

Initially I found the teaching style to be very similar to high school in that you contribute a lot in class, may have an assigned seating chart and have homework to complete for the next class. Initially I found this a little frustrating but as time went on I learnt how to really make the most of it. It seemed odd to me at first to see lecturers around campus and they would know your name but it

is nice to have a more personal relationship with your lecturers and they love to help. I also made a lot of friends in my classes and going for two semesters was great because in semester 2, I had some familiar faces in my classes!

## Accommodation

*What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?*

I stayed on campus in dorms. You do not get to select which dorm you want to go into like at Otago. You take a personality test to be placed with a roommate. I had an American as my roommate and we got along super well. Some people I know ended up in single rooms or in apartment style living too. In my dorm room, we shared a bathroom with the adjoining room and I loved being in a dorm again. Some people didn't like the style of living because they wanted a bit more independence or where their dorm was located on campus but it's kind of a lucky dip.

## Money matters

*Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance*

I had to cover costs for accommodation (\$9700 for both semesters), dining hall meal plan (\$5000 ish for the year), and flights were about \$1200 each way and I paid for an extra bag both ways which was around \$250. I also paid for travel insurance for my year abroad and some extra time after which cost about \$1800. The compulsory health insurance that Richmond has you purchase is about \$3700 for 2 semesters' coverage.

Honestly it was expensive and because you have to pay it all upfront it kind of makes it extra painful. I ended up taking half a year off in between studying at Otago and Richmond so I could work full-time and it was so worth. You can get a job on campus at Richmond, but I wanted to not waste any of my time that I had while I was in the USA.

*What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)*

I initially had some USD in cash and a cash passport card. The cash passport card was super annoying to load and didn't work at some stores so I would end up using my NZ debit card. This was fine but you have to pay a fee. I ended up opening a free US bank account when a bank came to visit the campus in the first week. This was insanely useful because I had a lot of difficulty not having a US bank account sometimes or a billing address that was not located in the US. I definitely suggest getting a US bank account as it's free and really handy having a US debit card.

## Visas & Insurance

*Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?*

Yes I had to apply for a visa online on the US government site. The US government websites are really outdated so this was challenging at times. After I completed the application you book an appointment at the consulate in Auckland and pay a non-refundable fee. I think it was about \$240 but I believe it has changed since then. I also had to complete a SEVIS form online and pay the

associated fee. When you're in Auckland you have a little interview and they ask why you're going to the US and what you'll be doing over there.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

Yes, Richmond has compulsory health insurance which you must buy.

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

*What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?*

You get daily emails from "spider bites" which let you know what activities are happening every week around campus. I had a friend and we decided to do a spider bite activity every 1 or 2 weeks which was pretty fun! I totally recommend if you're a rugby player getting in contact with those clubs (they have boys and girls teams!) because they love people who can play.

*What was the university/city like?*

The University is quite small and close-knit, everyone sort of knows everyone which is fun because it's easy to make friends. The campus is really beautiful and can be a bit of a bubble as you don't have to go very far for anything you need. I only went downtown a few times because it is pretty far away, it's about a 20 minute drive so it's definitely worth sharing an uber!

*Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?*

There is a place called Proper Pie Co downtown which is actually a guy from NZ who started a pie shop over there! I totally recommend going. My other favourite places were the Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens where you have to pay like \$12 to get in but they're gorgeous and the James River.

*Any tips for future students?*

The Basketball games are loads of fun and are usually packed. They give out free t-shirts all the time all over campus and they usually have some pretty cool ones.

## Overall Experience

*Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!*

When I first got to Richmond I was shocked at how warm it was having come straight from winter. It was around 30 degrees a lot of the days and very humid. In the winter it would get pretty cold and it snowed for us! I made so many friends while I was there with other exchange students and Americans. I recommend taking a bus or train to Washington DC or New York for the weekend with a group of you because it's really doable. I had friends who went to Costa Rica, Mexico and I went to the Bahamas for spring break. It's usually pretty easy to get some kind of deal and you should take the chance to travel to those places while you're so close.

I sometimes found myself getting a bit bogged down by a lot of the homework I had for my classes. Most people I know were taking elective papers for their degree but I had to take higher level classes

I actually needed to complete my degree. I found it was good to make some time for studying but then stop so you can actually go out and spend time with your friends.

I had my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday while I was in the USA and was worried before I went over that I would get left behind because everyone else would be older. I was totally wrong and most people aren't 21, a lot of places will let you in if you're underage and you may just get a mark on the back of your hand or a different coloured wristband. I wanted to go to Vegas for my 21<sup>st</sup> but it was difficult to organise everyone so I ended up staying in Richmond and spent my birthday at Cellar Wednesday on campus and it was such a good decision because all my friends were there.



The first football game of the season



Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden



Visiting New York for the weekend



Looking across the James River to  
Downtown Richmond



Toga Social!

The Richmond Campus

