



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

<i>Host University</i>	University of Richmond
<i>Semester & Year of Exchange</i>	Full year 2018
<i>Otago degree(s)</i>	BSc, BCom
<i>Major(s)</i>	Zoology, Economic and Finance

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Financial Cases and Modelling	English	FINC301	18
Fixed Income and Derivatives		FINC3XX	18
International Financial Management		FINC/ECON3XX	18
Environmental Economics		ECON3XX	18
Portfolio Management and Valuation		FINC 302	18
Financial Accounting		ACCT 102	18
Managerial Accounting		ACCT 202	18
All About America		?	18

Any comments about these papers?

Portfolio Management and Valuation is widely considered the hardest paper in the Business School.

Environmental Economics is relatively calculus intensive.

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

The papers are structured significantly different from Otago. There are small homework type assignments, generally on a weekly basis. Midterm and Final exams are typically 20 and 30% of total grade respectively. Teaching style is again significantly different. Lectures in the Business school tend to have around 20 students, are feel more like high school classes than university lectures. The professors get to know students personally and discussions are a big part learning.

Accommodation

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

All exchange students live on campus. I was housed in one of the apartments, which are in a block on the outskirts of the campus. This accommodation is for students in their penultimate or final year and offers more independence than a dormitory. A big advantage of the apartments is the kitchen facilities, the lounge area and the backyard. The biggest downside I could see is that they are further away from lecture theatres. My apartment to the Business school was about a 15-minute walk.

Money matters

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

Because I was for a full year, I was unable to purchase a return ticket initially. This made my flights more expensive, but they averaged out at about \$1000 NZD each way. Accommodation was around \$4000 a semester, plus meal plans which can be another \$4500 per semester. A full meal plan is compulsory if you are living in a dormitory, otherwise there are cheaper limited plans, or another option is pay per meal. My Visa cost about \$400 and the University has a mandatory insurance policy which is \$1400 per semester.

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

I used my credit card from NZ. Just check with your bank to discuss what is the best option they can offer in terms of transactions fees, withdrawal fees etc. In hindsight, it would have been worthwhile opening a US account.

Visas & Insurance

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

Getting the visa is on you, Otago cannot assist in this part. However, the process was not as daunting as it sounds. It does involve a visit to the US consulate in Auckland. All they do is look at you, ask very basic questions regarding your intentions in the US, then take your passport and accredit the visa. It's important to double check and make sure you have all the necessary documentation as the waitlist for another interview can be several weeks long.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

The University of Richmond has a mandatory insurance policy for all exchange students.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

A surprisingly large number of students are involved in extra-curricular activities. I joined the rugby team and found that was a good way to meet American friends right from the get-go. Because rugby is classified as a club rather than a Varsity sport, we only trained twice a week, so my time here wasn't dominated by rugby commitments.

What was the university/ city like?

The University has a true campus, meaning everything that you'll need is within walking distance. It is located in the suburbs, about a 15-minute drive from downtown Richmond. The city itself is relatively small about 230,000 inhabitants but with a larger metropolitan surrounding area. I found Richmond to be fun, safe and plenty of things to do.

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

Jack Browns is popular burger and beer restaurant that is close to campus. Carytown is the trendy, boutique area which a lot of people seem to enjoy.

Any tips for future students?

Don't let the seemingly high workload bog you down. You have to keep in mind that professors generally mark homework type assignments favourably because its more about them checking you have done the work and are keeping up to date in the course. It's also easy to get stuck into routine but I would encourage you to make the most of your time and branch out as much as you can. It's incredible how fast the semester goes by.

Overall Experience

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

My port of entry into the US was not typical of that for someone studying in Virginia. On Christmas day I flew into Vancouver where I meet my fellow scarfy flat mates from the previous year. In a 1981 GMC RV, in the depths of winter, we travelled across the Midwest making our way through; Chicago, New York, Philadelphia and eventually arriving on the University of Richmond campus. Not knowing anyone there, I really tried to immerse myself in as many extra circular activities as possible. I found this to be the best way to not only make friends but really get an authentic College experience. I joined the rugby team and I think it's fair to say they are still learning the ropes. However, I thoroughly enjoyed the club culture and environment.



Classes were a bit of a challenge initially as it took some time to get used to the intimate approach to the lectures. Discussions were a big focus of class time and required you to be on the ball all the time. Richmond has a similar campus style to Otago in the sense that there is no real need to leave campus, everything from academics to socialising is all very close. However, I saw it necessary to get out and explore every once in a while. Most students' timetables give them Friday off, which enabled me to take advantage of the longer weekend and travel. I went to Washington DC, Chesapeake Bay and Virginia Beach just to name a few. In Spring break, I was fortunate enough to travel to Nashville, Memphis and New Orleans. I would differently consider this week to be in the top three times of my life. The atmosphere was a cocktail of excitement and energy as thousands of college students poured into these destinations to let some steam off after a studious first half of semester.



The timing was slightly unfortunate for me as I was juggling graduate job interviews back home. Thankfully it all worked out. By the end of my time I had made close friends with one of the fraternities, a truly unique American experience and one I will cherish forever. To say this past year was incredible would be a massive understatement. I am extremely grateful for being able to participate in such a fantastic exchange program and couldn't rate it highly enough!