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Studying Abroad at San Francisco State University

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Student Perspective From:
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How difficult/easy was it to obtain a US visa?

It was difficult since I personally had to do almost all of the work myself without help from my university. A lot of the terms and forms were new and didn't make any sense in the beginning, but when you get into it, it works out. It also takes a long time to do the visa application—no short cuts there. The earlier you do it, the less stress it will be, and also schedule an appointment early, sometimes the wait can be long for interviews.

Where and how did you find temporary housing when you first arrived? How much did it cost? Describe your experience.

I met one Norwegian student in Norway before I left and he told me that he was arriving San Francisco earlier than me and that he could find housing, and that's what happened: I got here and already had a place to stay. That took away a lot of the stress that I know other students had finding a place. On the other hand, I didn't and still don't like the neighborhood I live in, but I couldn't do anything about that since I didn't pick the place myself: I trusted my new roommate.

Where and how did you find permanent housing? How much rent do you pay? Are you happy with where you live? Describe your experience.

The apartment is really nice and my roommates are as well, but the neighborhood is a little scary, hookers and drug dealers walk around the streets at nighttime, but the MUNI (public transport) stops right outside the door, so that's comforting. I pay 800 dollars plus additional money for internet.

How difficult/easy is it to get around? What mode of transport do you use primarily (public transport, bicycle, car, walk)?

I primarily use MUNI: it's easy and it's right outside my door, but there are a lot of delays that can be really annoying. There are also some places that you have to take a bus as well, and when the MUNI is late or having problems, it can be a long journey getting to certain areas. I wish I had a car

here, and I'm happy I have some friends that have a car, but for everyday matters the MUNI is more than fine.

How do you access your money? Did you open an American bank account? If so, was it worthwhile?

I use a Norwegian credit card. I opened an American bank account, but have never used it. It's just easier for me to use my Norwegian account since my mother works in a bank, and the American bank sends a lot of papers and offers, that confuse me a bit. I like to keep it easy when it comes to money.

Did you obtain a California driver's license? If so, was it worthwhile?

No, I did not, even though I probably should have. I drove around in California in the start when I got here, and as far as I know, that was ok, but now when I'm mostly at school and don't have a car myself I don't find it necessary. Maybe at the end of the semester when I want to travel a little I will regret not having it.

Did you find San Franciscans to be helpful if you were in need?

Yes; open and friendly people live here. I feel sometimes that things here get more complicated than they should be, but the help is always there.

Where did you obtain furniture for your room?

My landlord helped me find a bed, and my roommate went to Ikea and bought some stuff. The rest I actually picked off the street.

Primarily, do you buy groceries or do you eat out? Where and why?

Last semester I only ate out because I had classes all day, and was almost never home, but this semester I have more time, so I try to make my own food. Usually I go grocery shopping at Trader Joe's because I like to eat healthy and it's the closest to where I live, but sometimes I shop at Safeway if a friend can drive me.

How difficult/easy was it to make friends? Describe your experience.

I had two great roommates and we became friends at once. Last semester, I had school 24/7 studying theater in really practical classes, so I made a lot of good friends in my classes. However, outside of class it was hard for me to make friends because I didn't have any opportunity to go to the IEEC events. Even so, I had a couple of nights off in the start, and I got some international friends that I still keep in touch with. This semester though, I hope to also get some more international friends, not only American friends.

What IEEC commitment did you choose (flyering, tabling, language exchange, country ambassador, IEEC officer, special contribution)?**Describe your experience.**

I chose **country ambassador** because I knew that my schedule would be completely insane, so I couldn't take on too much responsibility. I also like to represent my country as I am proud of it and like to share the culture with Americans.

Were you able to enroll in the classes you wanted?

Yes; I've been very lucky. Because of the preregistration date, I got some subjects that I know that I would never get otherwise. Also, there are a lot of auditions in the theater department for enrolling certain courses, which is a good thing because it keeps the level high. Some subjects and plays (which you get credits for) are hard to get in to, but if you're well prepared and have some talents you'll make it. Also there's an advantage of being an international student.

How do your classes at SFSU compare to your classes at home?

It's a completely different system. When you study theater at Oslo University College, you don't have different classes you have to enroll. First year, you only have one class: Drama and Theater Communication, and that is what you do the whole year. But within those subjects you have a bunch of different subjects, but they are not classes you have to register for;

everyone has to do them. Then, the last 4 semesters of the bachelor program (only 6 semesters to get a bachelor), you can pick between two subjects each semester.

The subjects differ in the way that you get a little deeper into the material at Oslo University College, but here it's more intense. Also, you have class everyday from 9 to 3 or 4 with the same people all the time, about 30 people, so you get to know your classmates pretty well. But here you have more options and you can drop or add classes based on your likes or dislikes.