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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 should depend on which country you live in. For example, I am Taiwanese, and to apply for a US visa was not that difficult, but it was more expensive than I thought. It was also inconvenient since the AIT is only in Taipei, and people who want to apply for a visa need to go there in person. After I had an interview with the visa officer, I received the visa within half a month.

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

Actually, I have some classmates who had studied in SFSU before I arrived there; they arranged an apartment which was beside the school for my friends and I.

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

We lived in Parkmerced in a one-room and one-bath house. It cost US\$1900 for a month. The environment there was good and there were many security guards who patrolled around the area all day long. I think it was safe enough for a “freshman’s” first time at school and in a city. However, it was a little expensive. I know there are other, much cheaper, houses around the school. You can search for those places on the internet.

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

In general, it is really convenient to get around in San Francisco. There are many kinds of public transportation, such as MUNI and BART, which are the two main transportation systems in San Francisco, and they can take you to most places in San Francisco.

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

I took all of my money with me when I went to the United States. I opened an account at Bank of America, and put in all of my money as soon as I arrived there. Bank of America will provide you two accounts: one is a saving account and the other is a checking account. And they will give you a debit card which you can use instead of cash; it is convenient to pay using that.

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

No, I didn't.

**Where did you obtain furniture for your room?**

We went to IKEA and got all of the furniture we needed.

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

I did both. It should depend on where you live. My friend and I used to go to the supermarket that was near our apartment to get some food and

cooking supplies by ourselves. There is a Safeway and Trader Joe's near the school. You can get fresh and organic fruits in Trader Joe's. If you don't like to cook, you can go to the restaurants beside the school, or you can just google good restaurants on the internet, and take MUNI to get there.

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

It was really difficult for me to make friends. I think it was because of the cultural difference between Taiwan and western countries. We are more conservative, and we can hardly make an acquaintance actively. Since there was no fixed classroom environment in the university life, we didn't have fixed classmates, and it became difficult to get to know people well. I think if you want to make friends there, you should be more active and open-minded. Joining a student organization is a good way to make friends.

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

I chose **Flyering**. It was an easy job. All you have to do is take a stack of flyers once a week, and post them on the bulletin boards in one of the campus buildings.

**Were you able to enroll in the classes you wanted?**

Not really. Since I was an international student, I couldn't choose those specific subjects which were preserve for the local students, such as art, communication, and business colleges. My major was international trade in

my home country, but I couldn't choose those relative courses in SF State. I thought it was one of the biggest problems for my school life there.

**[NOTE: Students are allowed to enroll in classes based on their home university's partner agreements, and different universities have different agreements. Tam Kang University does not have a partner agreement with SF State's College of Business, thus cannot enroll in business courses.]**

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

One major difference between my home university and SF State was the teaching method. In the United States, teachers usually ask students to actively attend the class. In other words, they asked students to speak out and express themselves. However, students in Taiwan always receive the knowledge and information from teachers passively. I think it is more effective and efficient to learn by ourselves actively. It helps students to absorb and collect new knowledge faster.