

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	School of Computing / Computer Science
Host University	University of Oregon
NUS Semester and Year of Exchange (eg. AY14/15 Semester 1)	AY15/16 Semester 1

2. Study at Host University

Please provide information on the academics at your host university:

- Studying or learning culture at your host university. How were classes conducted?
- What did you like most or dislike most about the academics at your host University?
- Advice on module registration and module mapping

Advice on module registration and mapping: prepare TONS of mapping on NUS side!!! Explore other faculties if you are interested because approval of the art class mapping by SDE was actually quite unexpected for me. They have what seems like millions of faculties in the US (very liberal arts) that offer classes to all students regardless of major. And these level 1 classes are manageable (so don't be afraid to try them). Also, DON'T WORRY so much about registration. Exchange students get last priority and you only register when you get there, so don't panic when UO starts emailing you about registering early (it's actually just for US students...). There they don't have bidding, so you have to stalk the module registration site for openings sometimes. Sign up for all the waitlists you want to be on and visit the classes on the first lesson (it MUST be first lesson because a lot of classes's pre-requisite is that you attend the first class). Also, many people don't turn up on the first class and get kicked out, so that may be your spot right there!

I took 3 computer science classes (CS) and 1 art class. I got to experience a good range of teaching (in the sense that they were equivalent to level 1000, level 3000 and level 4000 classes). For all CS classes, we had lectures. Level 1000 one was a large lecture with less participation while the 3/4000 classes had about 30-40 students with more interaction during class. There was lab for the 1000 class and overall this class was extremely "spoon-fed". For the 3/4000, it was more like an NUS module except there was no tutorial, no labs, and low frequency of homework, but each homework was high weightage. The art class was fully hands-on.

I would say across all classes, the main difference is that you have to be very self-motivated to learn there (think, just lectures, no weekly tutorials/labs to keep up to date with). The classes were not difficult so you may not feel like studying as much as in NUS. To really have a good experience, for example for me to improve my CS and Art, I had to make myself read all the textbooks and practice art on my own, even though these were not "required". This was rather different since in NUS I find a lot of the professors will tell us exactly what was "required". A further example: one of our art assignments was to draw 100 drawings of the same thing. At first, I thought that was going to be a killer, and in NUS, if you don't meet the exact requirements, e.g. you did just 80 drawings, you may drop a grade (very structured grading system). But over there, even though I managed less than 50, I did many full drawings instead of sketches and this was acceptable as well and got an A (not so set in stone). Still I caution, even though this sounds like studying there is easier, some tasks are more taxing, like the Programming assignment. There was no "partial marks" like many classes in NUS, and if your program doesn't work, you get a straight 0.

SEP Report

I also attended a seminar style class and I would say the students there are MUCH more vocal and contribute a lot in discussions. If you like to learn from differing opinions, go for some seminar classes.

Anyway, studying was actually very enjoyable there, many students studied together in the libraries. I enjoyed the overall more relaxed academic culture. The professors were mostly very understanding and very, very, supportive of students. I don't really dislike anything but if I have to comment on one thing, it's that the professors and TAs have extremely short office hours and sometimes it was difficult to make appointments.

Please list the courses that you took during SEP. *(Please take note that the list of modules available to exchange students at the host university are subject to change. This table merely serves as reference.)*

Host University			NUS Equivalent		
Module code	Course title	ECTS Credit	Module code	Course title	Modular credit
CIS111	Introduction to Web Programming	4	CS 2001	-	4
CIS432	Computer Networks	4	CS2105	Introduction to Computer Networks	4
CIS420	Automata Theory	4	CS4232	Theory of Computation	4
ART233	Drawing I	4	ARX 3991	-	4

2. Accommodation

What kind of accommodation did you stay in during your exchange (eg. on campus / off campus)?

Would you recommend this accommodation to future outgoing students?

Do you have any other suggestions?

During my exchange, I stayed on campus in university housing/hall. If you're like me and never experienced hall, you may want to try it for experience. My hall was unbelievably expensive though (US ~\$4.43k) so if I had to do it a second time, I wouldn't choose hall... The experience was just so-so. But I guess it really depends on your corridor mates and room mate. I was already a Senior and my entire floor were Freshmen who had different priorities and outlook towards life. I didn't end up hanging out with them much. However, I was often at my friends' hall hanging out and found their hall mates much more fun and relatable. So it depends!

Staying on campus does come with more convenience, especially if you go during fall/winter (cold season) and don't want to have to go out to get food/walk so far to classes in the cold. You don't have to worry about transport if you go out late at night because they have a free 'taxi' service for students staying on campus until 2AM or something (BOOK IT EARLY)! Many of your friends will also stay on campus, so it's easy and cheap to share a (paid) ride back. The food in hall was exceptional (given my expectations of American food), the variety was good – there was RICE! (Meal plan comes with staying

SEP Report

in hall). Other than hall food, a lot of food and drinks around campus and downtown. Yelp is your best buddy when it comes to food.

Basically, lots of things are reachable by foot which is awesome. Don't expect transport to be like in Singapore, it's just good enough to get you around. Google maps is your best buddy because it's usually accurate (unlike in Singapore). And compared to many other cities, Eugene has a bus/tram that comes every 10-15 minutes in the day (you don't know how "revered" this in US!!!). Best of all, the buses are FREE for students!

I extended my stay in US with an internship and during that time, I stayed off-campus, in a house shared with 3 other girls (\$400/month/person... yup, look at the difference... and you get a whole house with a private living room to chill in and have friends over). I enjoyed staying off-campus much more, and the decrease in convenience, though noticeable, was not too much to handle. The streets are dark at night though, so it's scary to walk home alone. Lots of people (guys and girls alike) are very hospitable and so many of them have walked me home. The free ride extends out of campus too, so if you don't stay TOO far, you can still use that service. If you one of those who feel very unsafe in US, maybe you want to stay on campus. Safety is priority!

If you want to stay off-campus but can't cook, you can always buy the meal plan from housing kitchen and have meals in school before you go home. Still cheaper than staying on campus.

3. Activities during SEP

Were there any activities organized by school/student group/external organizations at your host university which you would like to recommend to other students?

ExplOregon – DO IT!!!!

The Host Family thing (can't remember it's name because I didn't manage to get a family) is also worth it. I ended up attaching myself to a friend's family and they were the BEST American family I've ever met. They brought us around, offered me a place when I was still looking before my internship, had lots of game nights at their house and I made even more friends through them. (Of course, not all families offer the same experience, they all do it voluntarily. But it's still good to have a point of contact and a place to stay before orientation!)

There are so many organizations that I don't even have to recommend any. If you walk around school enough, network enough, you're bound to end up in a few organizations at least. Lots of places to hang out in even if you don't join the organization who own's that place proper (e.g. Woman's Center, Mills International Students Center etc.) If you can't find any, follow Facebook groups and events! They upload everything there in the US! Really convenient.

Also, get a bunch of friends, rent a car and drive to somewhere fun/beautiful (if you can't drive, it's important to make friends who can! Well don't make friends just to take advantage of them but you get the drift). It'd be great if you could find an American friend who has a car plus is interested in bringing exchange students around. Oregon is BEAUTIFUL. If you love nature, so many nice places just 2-3 h drive away...

SEP Report

4. Cost of Living

Please provide an estimation of how much money you spent during your SEP?

Please list travel expenses separately.

SEP alone: About \$8,000 USD

Airfare ; \$820

Housing ; \$4,400

School Fees, Health Insurance ; \$1,100

External Food ; \$530

External Transport ; \$120

Activities ; \$800

Shopping ; \$500

Misc, e.g. phone bills, yoga classes, school/hall supplies, hospital bills ; \$600

Note: the air fare is for one way on Singapore Airlines, I claimed a free ticket for SIN-USA.

This breakdown includes all travels DURING school term. If you plan to travel during the holidays, my own budget saw me spending about \$700 on a ski trip ++ during winter break.

5. Challenges

Did you face any challenging issues during your SEP stint? How did you overcome it/them?

I did not face many challenges during my SEP. I think I was lucky to have been in Eugene, a college town that was safer and more accessible than many other places in the USA.

Safety was definitely one of my greatest concerns. There were a few cases of crime on/near campus and I was personally (verbally) sexually harassed on 1-2 occasions (there is a higher percentage of American guys who find it okay to harass girls so be careful). It didn't escalate to anything horrible but if you are concerned about such issues, do look for a staff to talk about it. You can refuse to walk alone completely by calling the Police to escort you home (if you didn't get a free ride slot). I didn't try calling the police before but they do emphasize it is an option. Try to remember a few locations where there are emergency buttons (on campus) and walk there when you feel danger.

I also had a (kind of) life-threatening allergy reaction during my stay. I was lucky I was with a friend... I didn't overcome this myself so all I can say is, even if you are extremely introverted, you must at least have one point of contact!

6. Overall SEP Experience

Please write one paragraph about your exchange experience and attach some photos that represent your exchange experience.

SEP Report

My exchange experience was crafted by the people I surrounded myself with. You get to meet international friends you otherwise would not have and learn so much more about people and communicating with people in general. I learnt about what mattered to me through the sheer variety of activities, classes, people, situations that you participate in, get into, and meet there. I got to be really comfortable with myself in a new environment and brought that fresh personality back. Making your own travel plans was a key part of SEP as well as you'll learn a lot (about independence, making decisions, budgeting, people (again), managing between fun/travels and being a student etc.). I got to like myself a lot more during SEP and I think this self-search/increased self-acceptance may not have been so easily achieved had I not gone on SEP (in fact, I was afraid of disliking myself even more on SEP as I saw myself struggling to be independent). This was an important takeaway for me, though I don't guarantee everyone will find it on SEP. Who knows, you may surprise yourself too! SEP was a valuable experience and the peak of my college years. I encourage anyone who is considering going on SEP and could afford it to stop hesitating, stop worrying, and go for it. It was money well spent and it's something you'll never be able to buy once you graduate.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

Remember to get out there and do something, meet people, go somewhere. The term passes by in a flash and the weather too, changes fast. Go out while the weather is warmer. Even if you are the kind that prefer less interaction with people, go out there by yourself and enjoy the nature in Oregon. It may seem daunting to live alone before you go, but there are so many resources to help you if you just ask. Be eager to experience, don't panic, enjoy!

8. Report Submission

Please submit your report (including photos*) at <https://share.nus.edu.sg/goabroad/Lists/SEPReport/AllItems.aspx>. Please note that you can only upload one document. As such, please **zip your report and photos into one file** and name the file in this format 'Host University_Full Name' (eg. Waseda University_Tan Mei Ling).

*Photo submission:

- 1 image of you with host university landmarks in the background
- 2 images of you with your exchange friends or local students
- Submit the photos in JPEG format. Good quality photos between 2MB and 5MB are preferred.
- Please name all photos in this format 'Host University_Full Name_Caption' (eg. Waseda University_Tan Mei Ling_Visit to Mt Fuji with exchange friends).

Kindly note that we may share your report on the NUS/IRO website and relevant information at SEP information sessions and/or in publicity collaterals.

SEP Report