

台灣聯合大學系統學生出國交換計畫心得報告

年度	學校	姓名	出國交換學校	交換方式
103	清華大學	陳孟圻	UCSD	暑期

This is the report of 2014 international UCSD summer undergraduate research program written by Chen, Meng-Chi. As the first group of students in Taiwan to attend this program, I will provide more information about how to go to US, how to live in US, and introduce American cultures, in order to help the students attending this program in future. In other word, this report is more like an “instruction” for students attending this program.

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Figure 1. The two professors in the middle is the program originator Shu Chien and his wife Kuang-Chung. The other students are in the same program but from Zhejiang University.

Motivation

I've been planning to study for Ph.D. degree in US after graduate since I was a freshman. To apply for it, I need certification of proficiency in English (TOEFL and GRE), good GPA, and research experience. I have difficulty in getting a good GPA, so I need more research experience to compensate.

Thankfully, this program provides a great and rare chance to do the summer research in UCSD. I got this information just a day before deadline and start preparing the required documents right away.

Purpose

A. Research experience

Exchange programs offer in universities in Taiwan are mostly academic courses for a semester or more. Program for doing research in distinguished universities is very rare.

B. Know someone who will help you in your future

We made many friends there who might help us in our future. For example, I can ask the professor for a recommendation when I need to apply for graduated program, and I can ask seniors and colleague in different field for help if I have problem.

C. Get certification

A week before the end of the program, there is a Summer Research Conference in UCSD held for all summer intern in UCSD to present their work during this summer, and a certification will be issued after the conference.

Also, at the end of the program, the exchange program organizer in IFS center in UCSD will award a certification to students for University system of Taiwan.

D. American Culture

It's exciting and challenging to learn how to live in the US and experience American culture.

E. Make friends

It's always good for one to expand social networks. People from different background provides different points of views that we can learn from it.

F. Take a trip and relax

Research has shown that temporarily getting away from the place we used to be helps us to learn and to grow, and it have the potential to teach people about themselves and the society

in which they live.

About the program

Different from usual semester exchange program, this program is a research internship. Attendants are going to do research in lab, which provide more practical experience.

The program is started by Prof. [Shu Chien](#) (錢煦) in 2012. At first, he hoped to provide students in Zhejiang University (浙江大學), his home town, with chance to come to UCSD for summer research. In 2012 and 2013, there were only students from Zhejiang University.



Then, Prof. Shu Chien ask Prof. [Wing-Huen Ip](#) (葉永烜), the vice principle of the University System of Taiwan (UST) to see if they can provide this chance to Taiwanese students. As a result, we have chance to apply for this internship in UCSD in 2014 and become the first group of students in Taiwan to attend this program.



Thanks for the efforts and kindness of two professors and other faculties in UST and UCSD, we can attend this internship that have profound impact in our future.

Visiting Details

A. *Preparation before Visiting*

1. **Make a Facebook group**

Once the admitted list of the students to go to UCSD is released by UST (around early April), I started to search everyone on Facebook and add them to a group called "[2014 UCSD Summer research, Taiwan](#)" for the following important reasons.

- As we are the first group of the students from Taiwan to go to UCSD, there are few information about the trip we can have from officials, so we need a platform to share important information and help each other.
- Because there are many trivial thing to apply before the internship, we need to remind each other.
- Since we will live together in a house (but in different rooms) like family and the luggage one can bring is limited, we have to discuss and distribute who to bring certain daily necessities like cooking wares, hair dryer, and simple medicine. Here, the "[UCSD 大家一起來!!](#)" is the Google doc Laura Lu opened to distribute thing to bring.

The students from Zhejiang University even have a few face-to-face meetings to discuss important things before visiting. But it's hard for us because UST students are in different campus.

I strongly advice the next group of students and do the same way to help each other. It's also easier for you to live together if you know your housemates before head.

2. **Plane ticket & way to UCSD**

The admitted list will be announced by UST around early April. It's better to order the plane ticket once you're selected, because the later you order the ticket, the more expensive it will be.

Try to ask travel agency for cheaper plane ticket, because they've ordered them much more early in large quantity. Also compare the price with the price on the web or other provider. The plane ticket cost around NT.40,000~60,000 for round trip(來回機票).

There are two suggested route for you:

- A. TPE.→CAN.→LAX.→rent a car¹ →UCSD
 B. TPE.→LAX.→SAN.→take a shuttle or bus →UCSD

Route	Advantage	Disadvantage
A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap in plane ticket (~40,000) • Can go to some sights on the way to UCSD • Don't need to drag the heavy luggage for too long. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait 5 hours for transfer in CAN. • Cost ~\$120 to rent a car. • Cost ~\$70 to find a hotel. (Car and hotel will be cheaper if shared) • Risk of accident.
B.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive in plane ticket (~60,000) • May need to sleep in airport hotel to wait for transfer for a night (~\$140). • Need to drag the heavy luggage for some distance.

I didn't suggest to use mass transportation system to go from LAX to UCSD, because it too tiring to drag heavy luggage and walk for a long distance.

IATA² Code:

TPE: Taiwan Taoyuan International (台灣國際桃園機場)

CAN: Guangzhou Baiyun International (廣州白雲國際機場)

LAX: Los Angeles International

SAN: San Diego International

3. Choose professor

We can choose five professors' lab in UCSD in order of your preference, and the program coordinator in UCSD will send your CV to each of them in order and asked them if they can provide you a position for internship in the summer.

If you have some interested research topic, for example solar forecasting, cosmic ray spallation, or Mars cement, just search them on UCSD website, then you will easily find the professors you want. Please be careful when choosing the research topic, read the publications in detail to make sure it's what you want. It's a matter of a summer.

¹ See "Car Renta" on page 9.

² International Air Transport Association

You don't have to contact the professors in advance, unless you really want to get in his/her lab and have more supplement material than those you had sent to the UST. Professor will usually accept students for internship unless he/she have some others thing to do during the summer. Don't be sad if your first professor doesn't take you.

4. Visa apply

All information can be found on [AIT website](#).

This is the most annoying and expensive part.

a) SEVIS Fee

First, go to [SEVIS I-901 Fee processing website](#), choose "Submit Form I-901 and Fee Payment", type in your SEVIS Identification Number on DS-2019, answer a series of question, and pay \$180 to US Home land security online.

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), established by the Department of Homeland Security, is the web-accessible database for monitoring information about exchange visitors, international students and scholars subject to Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP).

b) MRV fee

Second, go to [Apply For a Nonimmigrant Visa](#), follow the instruction, and pay \$160 to AIT

Each applicant must have their own Form DS-160 visa application.

The Form DS-160 must be completed and submitted online prior to your interview at the American Institute in Taiwan. The barcode number on the Form DS-160 confirmation page is required in order to book your interview. The Form DS-160 must be submitted online.

c) Schedule an Appointment

Third, with your "Nonimmigrant Visa - Confirmation Page", log in [Apply For a Nonimmigrant Visa](#), and schedule for an appointment.

After you schedule the appointment, go to [Visa Interview Process Tour](#) (簽證面談程序虛擬實境導覽) to preview the procedure when having a VISA interview in AIT.

d) VISA interview in AIT

You will have your visa interview in AIT, across from the Affiliated Senior High School of National Taiwan Normal University. For the important thing you need to bring, please see my [post](#) in our group.

5. Insurance

The medical service in US is very expensive, so we'd better buy the insurance to cover it. Also remember to ask for the medical certificate or medical record correlation data, and the expense receipt principal edition (the expense are detailed) if you have a medical service. Actual situation depend on the requirements of your insurance company.

Please buy the insurance just in case any kind of accident.

6. Things to bring and not to bring

We will live in a house-like dormitory, living a life with researching, cooking, and traveling

There's some things that I regret I didn't bring and I regret to bring.

a) Things to bring

- Kitchen wares

We need to buy food from supermarket and cook by ourselves a lot (cause it's cheaper), and we will have a kitchen with stove, oven, drain, table, and refrigerator but no kitchen wares at all. I recommend you guys open a Google Doc to distribute the kitchen wares. Notice that the stove is electric stove, so please bring flat-bottom pot.

- Cooking Skill

As I mentioned above, we need to cook by ourselves a lot, so learn some easy and delicious dished before you go there.

- Medicine

The medical service and medicine is expensive in US, please bring some necessary medicine.

- Internet cable

The internet outlet is on the corner of the room, 10m (or longer) internet cable is suggested.

- Sun cream and sun glasses

The sunlight in San Diego is much more strong in Taiwan, because it too dry thus there's no moisture in the air to decrease its intensity. Sun cream and sun glasses is highly recommended.

- International driver's license

If you want to have more fun you might need to rent a car and travel around. So please apply for an international driver's license in Taiwan and practice driving skill.

- Traveler's Ticket

Traveler's ticket is kind of ticket that can be cashed with your passport in banks

or certain stores in US after you signed on them, and you can bought them in every banks in Taiwan. If it missing or stolen, it can't be used by others, and you can cancel their validity from the bank you bought them if you remember the serial number on the ticket. Overall, it's equal to cash, and safe.

It's better to bring more cash (or traveler's ticket) than use Taiwanese credit card, because every buy cost a transfer fee.

For the safety of your cash, you can create a bank account³ in US so you don't need to worry someone will steal your money or the missing problem.

- Prepaid phone card

Communication is important in US. I use Google Map a lot to locate my position and plan a route for me, and we also need to call others. Prepaid card DM will be distributed in front of the AIT, and I bought from [Calling Taiwan](#).

b) Things not to bring too much

- Books

Don't bring any books except notebook or the books really highly related to your research. You won't have time to read them and that will add weight to your luggage.

- Clothes and Shoes

Famous brand's product is usually cheaper in US. For example, a pair of Timberland's boots sells for NT.6000 in Taiwan but it's only cost \$110 in the outlet here. There's chance that you can go to outlet to shop for clothes or shoes, so don't bring too much if you plan to shop for some in US.

B. Visiting

1. From Taiwan to UCSD

The program coordinator in UCSD said that we should arrive in San Diego on July 6th and depart on August 23rd. And the dormitory was available from July 6th and depart on August 23rd (or up to 3 days after the program has ended, August 26th if you let me know in advance and pay an extra \$35 per night). In order to have more time to adjust the jet leg, act not too hurry, and play around San Diego and Los Angeles for a few days after the program ended, I decided to arrive on July 5th, a day earlier, and depart on August 26th.

Once the date is decided, I asked if there's anyone going together with me, so that we can take care of each other and share the price of car and hotel.

³ See "Create an bank account" on page 13.

I and Laura went together. We plan to arrive LAX because the plane ticket only cost less than NT.40,000 bought from travel agency⁴. Though LAN is 200km away from UCSD, we decided to rent a car and travel all the way down there.

We make a reservation for the car and hotel in LA near the airport online in advance. We first arrived CAN and wait 5 tiring hours for transfer, and flew 13 hours and arrive LAX. It was 19:40, than we take a shuttle just on the gate of the airport to Dollars, the car rental provider. Once we got the car, drove to hotel directly and stay for a night. On the next day, we went to Manhattan Beach and Long Beach to enjoy the beautiful beach and great scenery in California, and drove all the way down to UCSD.

After arrive UCSD, we first went to Earl's place to get the key for the dorm, and check in.

Then, we drove to the market near the campus to buy some necessities. Bottle water and food for dinner is suggested. We went back to UCSD to put the things we bought and drove to downtown to return the car. We than take the Dollar's shuttle to the SAN and take a \$17 car service back direct to the dormitory.

2. Get start

After you get your luggage all set in Matthew's Apartment, the dorm you will might live in, walk to the nearest supermarket zone⁵, explore, and buy the food for your first meal in your dorm.

3. Daily life

I usually got up around 6 o'clock, and started making breakfast. It was about 7 o'clock or more when I completed the breakfast, I then woke up my roommates for breakfast. I finished the breakfast and arrive lab before 8 o'clock, and started working. Around 12 o'clock, I would ask my friends if we can try some stores for cheap lunch in campus, or we can go back to the dorm to cook for dinner, but that's more time consuming.

I usually finished the lunch and went back to lab before 2 o'clock, and worked until 5 o'clock. After that, we hang out and do some **a Summer Research Conference** in UCSD hold for all summer intern in UCSD to present their work during this summer, and a certification will be issued after the conference.

⁵ Ralphs (8657 Villa La Jolla Dr., La Jolla, CA 92037) is the nearest 24hr supermarket near UCSD, about 15 min walk from Mathews Apartment.

It's hard to have any really big result in just 6 weeks of research. It will be great if you've involved in the project of your group and have some actual contribution. All you need to do is to do your best and get will with your professor, so that he/she will write a good recommendation letter for you.

Evening activities.

4. Research

In every summer, UCSD [Academic Enrichment Programs](#) (AEP) provide many position for interns from many internship plans like STARS, MARC, and UC Scholar. There will be many interns like you from universities around US come to UCSD for summer research, but the program period is a little different.

Around mid-August, there will be a Summer Research Conference in UCSD hold for all summer intern in UCSD to present their work during this summer, and a certification will be issued after the conference.

It's hard to have any really big result in just 6 weeks of research. It will be great if you've involved in the project of your group and have some actual contribution. All you need to do is to do your best and get will with your professor, so that he/she will write a good recommendation letter for you.

5. Evening activities

After work, the we usually took bus to explore the La Jolla beach, or go to different supermarket to buy necessities, or see movie in AMC Movie Theater. There are few sites worth mentioning.

First, there's a Chinese supermarket call Ranch 99⁶ selling mainly Chinese food for the local Chinese. We can even bought Taiwan Beer there. There's Tea N More next to it selling boba milk tea.

Second, there's Torrey Pines Gliderport⁷ on the northwest corner of the campus, a great spot to watch for the sun set.

Third, the La Jolla beach is a great place for surfing, sunset, and relax. It's breathing

⁶ Ranch 99, 7330 Clairemont Mesa Blvd #112, San Diego, CA 92111

⁷ Torrey Pines Gliderport, 2800 Torrey Pines Scenic Dr., La Jolla, CA 92037

taking scenery take us away from the hustle and bustle of city life.

Last, there are many great spot that you have chance to take great pictures, and there's Imprint center in the campus where you can print your picture in 4'x6' for only \$0.33. So don't forget to send post cards to your families, teachers, and good friends in Taiwan.

6. Weekend activities

a) Exotic Food Party

We had an Exotic Food Party at a weekend with other interns in UCSD. There's about 4 to 5 house attended this party, and each of the house prepare 2~3 dishes of their hometown food.

We prepare glutinous rice (滷肉飯), pearl milk tea (珍珠奶茶), Taiwanese sausage, and green bean sweet soup (綠豆湯) for the party.

During the preparation of the dishes, we've learned that it wasn't easy to find the ingredients we need in US, and the procedure to make these common Taiwanese traditional foods wasn't easy too. Also, we tasted American food, Mexican Food, and African Food in the party.

b) Wine tasting Party

We also had a wine tasting Party at another weekend with other interns in UCSD. We brought different liquor and tasted them together. Our Taiwanese beer bought in Chinese market there was said to be more light and tasteful than other beers in US. The most impressive wine I've tasted is a kind of Mexican wine which is kind of sweet and won't dry at all, which is the style I like.

c) Go to Mexico

We were invited to Mexico by my college at a weekend. Mexico was fantastic and people there were very enthusiastic and hospital. However, it was also a little dangerous there. For example, when we were crossing a bridge across a dry river bed, there were some people under the bridge keep saying "gracias!" which means thank you in Spanish ,begging for money from us . Moreover, the business man there is a little more aggressive on selling things to us, which makes me feel nervous.

If you want to go to Mexico, please travel with a Mexican or someone who's good at Spanish. Also going from US to Mexico is an easy and non-stop track; however, going back in much harder. We waited in line for 3 hours until we passed the gate. Please bring the passport and DS-2019 with you so that you can come back to US.

7. After-program activities

After the program finished, we rent a car for three days and travel all the way to Hoover Dam, Las Vegas, and Great Canyon.

C. Special Topic

1. Car Rental and some other driving information

The average price to rent a car is \$100~120 per day. The car rental company usually show the price without taxes, insurance (usually \$30 per day), and underage fee (usually \$25 per day for renters under 25) on the web site.

Be careful for any additional fees and look them up or ask the clerk clearly. For the insurance, I suggest to pick the middle coverage. They always ask you to buy full coverage so that they can earn more.

The age limit to rent a car is 21 for every company except Hertz. Their age limit is 20, but their price is a little more expensive than Dollars. You'd better still need to compare the price carefully.

Please drive very carefully, obey the speed limit and traffic rules, and always check your license is with you every time you hit the road in US, because you won't want to have an accident in US, the traffic ticket in US is crazy expensive (\$200~\$300), and you might go to jail if you get caught driving without license.

If you see a police car driving behind you with its light on, which means "pull over", you have to stop aside and let the police officer check.

2. Create an bank account

If you worry about the safety of your cash and traveler's ticket, and want to make it easier when buying things, I suggest you create a bank account.

There's a bank in Price Center in the campus call CHASE, where you can create an account without paying monthly service.

Reflection and Acknowledgement

First, I would like to thank the program originators Prof. Shu Chien, and Prof. Wing-Huen Ip for starting the valuable program and bring it to Taiwan.

Second, I would like to thank Prof. Jan Kleissl, my PI in UCSD, for provide me a great experience in solar forecasting technology.

Third, I would like to thank the UST officer Anling Lee, Caroline Ma, and the UCSD officer Melissa Kurtis Micou, Jennifer Homrich, for answering me a lot of annoying questions.

Forth, I would like to thank other Taiwanese students, Laura (呂佳燕), Lawrence(曾鼎翔), Cindy (蔡安喬), and Danny (陳端陽) for helping me a lot during the trip.

Last, thank the greatest founder, my parents for helping me to fulfill this journey.

Recommendations

First, I was very nervous before visiting. Because we are the first group of students in Taiwan to attend this program, there is not much information and experience officials can provide us. I hope in the following years, the students can have more information and experience their need from the officers in both UST and UCSD as well as the previous students.

Second, I've confirm that nearly all the intern there are paid to do the internship. However, we have to pay for ourselves a lot. The UST have already found us a little, and I hope the UCSD can also help us a little.

In conclusion, I think this program gave me a profound impact and do benefits me a lot.