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**Introduction**

To me I have always studied abroad. I grew up in Australia and moved to Hawaii to attend college at UH Manoa. Moving to Hawaii was definitely a new environment and required me to get used to living and studying in a new country and creating a new circle of friends. What I learnt from this experience is that I grew up as a person, became more confident, and was able to take on heavier loads of work.

When I found out about the opportunity to study abroad through Shidler I was excited to attempt moving again to another country, challenging myself to go through the experience again.

I decided to study in Asia but wasn't sure which school. I looked into the SKY universities (i.e., Seoul National University, Korea University, Yonsei University) in Korea and some schools in Japan and completely overlooked Hong Kong. Rikki Mitsunaga later mentioned to me the possibility of studying at the University of Hong Kong and that opportunity alone was all I needed.

The University of Hong Kong is one of the top universities in Asia and has a tough international business management program, so I was really excited to challenge myself academically. I was expecting the students there to be much more educated and self-disciplined and I was expecting the workload to be a lot higher than here in Hawaii.

I was expecting Hong Kong to be a big city. I had never really lived in a city and was nervous about missing out on things I'm passionate about such as surfing, hiking, and anything in the water. I was also nervous about enjoying the city in general. I had heard from family and friends about how good the public transport was, and my response was thinking 'public transport is something I hate, no matter how good it is, why would that be something to look forward to'? (I learnt later why it made a huge difference and I now agree). I also had heard how good the food was going to be and I was very excited for that too.

Hong Kong is an expensive place to live, without the help from my donor Ms. Wendy Tong Barnes, I wouldn't have been able to take the opportunity to study abroad at the University of Hong Kong. I also was privileged to meet with Wendy for lunch in Hong Kong and she was also grateful to meet me and Rachelle (another donor recipient). Wendy is a very successful business woman on the board of a few companies and graduated from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I loved meeting with her and hearing her stories.



*Pictured above: I'm hiking down from the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest peak in Hong Kong, sunrise peak on Lantau*

## **University Experience**

At The University of Hong Kong I took a few management classes and a supervised social venture experience, (i.e., China business environment, Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, Multinational Corporations and Supervised Social Venture Experience). The classes were similar in size to UH Manoa and most of the students in my classes were exchange students, mainly European students.

The class structure was similar with lectures, mid-terms, group projects and final exams. Although the classes sometimes were only once a week and for 3 hours, this was actually a good thing because it gave me time to explore during my days off. I made many new friends in the first week during orientation activities. HKU has a great selection of tours to take for exchange students during the first two weeks of school where you can meet other exchange

students and get a little feel for what Hong Kong is like. After those first couple weeks I was spending time with the same 5 people who became my closest friends in Hong Kong. Interestingly, our diverse group consisted of 2 Cantonese students from California, 1 Irish, 1 Spanish, 1 Turkish, and me.



*Pictured above: I'm on the far right along with my good friends at a waterfall in Hong Kong.*

I didn't join any extra-curricular activities although I wish I did. HKU has a really cool culture of inter hall sports competition. In particular field hockey, basketball, lacrosse and tennis are very popular. In my hall, Swire Hall, it is actually mandatory to join a sports team or other club activities if you were to continue your residence for more than 1 semester.

I did face some challenges living on campus. Swire Hall is a great location, right next to the business college, and is made up of mostly local students. I faced a language barrier with the hall staff since only the managers speak good English. Most exchange students were placed in the halls called Jockey Villages.

I also had a challenge with food. I am very used to, and enjoy, cooking my own food and having control over my diet. However, living in small spaces with almost no access to cooking equipment made that difficult. I spent money buying pots, knives, cutting boards, etc. although it would have been a better decision to adapt to the eating out culture there more.

I did have great success with my classes. I was expecting to earn good grades would be very difficult, nearly impossible, but the lecturers are fair and getting an 'A' would require a little more studying than what we're used to at UHM. I also had a lot of success with managing my time and was able to enjoy some travelling time to visit Vietnam and the Philippines, both only a short flight and with return tickets for around \$100.

The highlight of my experience at HKU was the Supervised Social Venture Experience. If you are interested in studying at HKU and want to really learn the practical side of doing business in Asia, then take this course. David Bishop is a Principal Lecturer at the University of Hong Kong and Fudan University, Shanghai. He was previously an attorney and was constantly searching for commercial solutions to societal problems. He is the founder and director of multiple non-profit companies, which has been started with HKU students, one of which is Soap Cycling. (<http://soapcycling.org>). My supervised experience was starting a booking platform for local guides called One Degree, <http://www.onedegreetours.com>.

## **Hong Kong**

Hong Kong exceeded my expectations! I never imagined how beautiful and how much nature there would be. Hong Kong is definitely not just a big city. It is surrounded lots of areas to explore - outer islands, national parks, mountains and beaches. The water may not be like what we have in Hawaii but there are still some clean places to swim, not to mention the waterfall spots. With Hong Kong's incredible train and bus lines, you can escape from the city as quickly as an hour.

Hong Kong used to be British ruled, and so there are some noticeable UK influences but it is not like the US at all. It is an Asian country and shouldn't be expected to be otherwise. My assumption that everyone would understand English was very wrong but I had a great experience learning to live in a Cantonese, Chinese environment.

## **Tools for the Future and Lessons Learned**

Studying in Asia confirmed my passion for international business. I learned that almost every company is international and has some presence or involvement with an Asian country. I

learned a lot about the environment of business in China, as well as surrounding countries. I also learned about myself, what I like, what environment I want to live in. I grew my capacity to deal with stressful situations and take on heavier workloads. I also learned more about the purpose of social ventures and using business to alleviate poverty.

I am very happy to have made the international connections that I now have. In fact, I will be visiting 1 friend in Ireland this coming summer. I am also very happy with professional connections that I have made with my supervisor, David Bishop and others.

### **Conclusion**

Studying abroad in a way was what I was expecting - new experiences and challenges but no one can explain to you what you will experience. So many things were new, exciting, and challenging. I am very grateful for the support that has been given to me by the University of Hawaii, Manoa's Shilder College of Business and my donor, Wendy Tong Barnes. This experience of a life time wouldn't have been possible without her contribution.

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