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## Abstract

My exchange semester at Purdue University was a transformative experience that expanded my academic interests and provided insight into a different educational system. Although I had applied to universities in Austria and Germany for language learning, I was assigned to Purdue in the United States. While this was not my original place, I embraced the opportunity and found a new purpose.

Before arriving, I had to navigate course selection, housing, meal plans, and transportation. Securing a dorm on campus was particularly stressful, as I only received confirmation two days before my departure. Living expenses in the US were also significantly higher than in Taiwan, which limited my ability to travel. However, I focused on making the most of my academic experience. As a Foreign Language and Literature student, I explored electives in Speech Pathology, a field I had always found interesting. Purdue's highly ranked program inspired me to consider a master's degree in the field, but since my undergraduate background did not align with its requirements, I ultimately chose to pursue a master's in human resources and management. This semester not only broadened my academic perspectives but also shaped my future career path.

我在普渡大學的交換學期是一段深具變革性的經歷，不僅拓展了我的學術興趣，也讓我深入了解不同文化的教育體系。申請過程充滿挑戰，因為我對相關要求並不熟悉。當初我申請的是奧地利和德國的大學，以專注於語言學習，但最終被分配到美國的普渡大學。雖然這並非我的原定計畫，但我仍然把握機會，並在這段經歷中找到新的目標。

在抵達之前，我需要處理課程選擇、住宿、餐飲計畫和交通等事宜。其中，獲得校內宿舍的過程尤為緊張，因為直到出發前兩天才收到確認通知。此外，美國的生活費遠高於台灣，這也限制了我想到其他城市旅遊的機會。然而，我選擇專注於學術發展，充分利用這次學習機會。作為外國語文學系的學生，我選修了語言治療相關課程，這個領域一直令我感興趣。而普渡大學的語言治療學系在全美排名第二，激發了我攻讀該領域碩士學位的想法。然而，由於我的學士背景與該領域要求不符，最終我決定攻讀人力資源管理碩士學位。這個學期不僅拓展了我的學術視野，也影響了我的未來職涯發展。

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## **Study Abroad Report**

### **Purpose**

Originally, my goal in joining the exchange program was to focus on language learning, which is why I applied mostly to universities in Austria and Germany. However, when the results were announced, I was assigned to Purdue University in the United States. While it wasn't my initial plan, I embraced the opportunity and found a new purpose in this unexpected outcome.

As a student in the Foreign Language and Literature department, a significant part of my curriculum revolves around language studies. Among the many electives available, I was particularly drawn to courses in Speech Pathology, a field that has always interested me. Coincidentally, Purdue offers an undergraduate program in Speech Pathology, which is ranked as the second best in the US. This discovery gave me a new purpose, shifting my focus towards exploring another field of interest during my semester abroad.

### **Application process**

#### Purdue application

I was honored to be the first selected to go to Purdue University. At the beginning of the application process, I felt lost because I had no one to ask for guidance. I had to communicate frequently with the international affairs office to clarify many details. Purdue required several documents for my application, including my transcripts, TOEFL scores, proof of financial support, and a copy of my passport. The most challenging part was obtaining the correct format for my financial support document. Purdue had a specific requirement that my Taiwanese bank could not meet, so I had to visit multiple banks several times before my financial proof was finally accepted. The process was long and sometimes confusing, but I was fortunate to receive support from the helpful staff at both NCKU and Purdue, who guided me through the challenges and made my application successful.

#### Visa process

Navigating the student visa application process was another challenge I had to figure out on my own. It was my first time applying for a student visa, and at first, I felt overwhelmed by the number of steps involved. Luckily, I found many helpful testimonials and tutorials online that guided me through the process. To complete my visa application, I needed several important documents, including my DS-2019, DS-160, proof of payment for the SEVIS fee, a receipt for my U.S. embassy appointment, financial proof, and a properly formatted passport-sized photo. Each of these requirements had its own set of instructions, and I had to ensure that every detail was correct to avoid delays.

While the process seemed lengthy and complex at first, I realized that once I understood the steps clearly, it was more manageable than I had expected. Scheduling the embassy appointment and preparing for the visa interview were particularly nerve-racking, but with careful preparation, I felt more confident. Looking back, this experience taught me valuable skills in patience, organization, and problem-solving—qualities that will undoubtedly help me in my academic journey and beyond.

### Procedures before arriving

Before arriving in the U.S., I had to take care of several important matters, including my class schedule, dorm contract, meal plan, and transportation. Since I was enrolled in a different program at NCKU, I had to review Purdue's course offerings to determine which ones I was eligible to take. Many of the courses in Speech Pathology required prerequisite classes, which meant I couldn't enroll in them. In the end, I managed to register for two freshman-level courses, one junior-level course, and one additional class from another department. While NCKU required only two credits, Purdue had a minimum requirement of 12, so I made sure to meet Purdue's standard.

After selecting my courses, I needed to check where they would be held, as this would help me decide which dorm to apply for. Since walking is the primary mode of transportation on campus, I wanted to choose a dorm within a reasonable walking distance. However, when I received my dorm assignment, I realized I had been placed in a residence that was a 10-minute drive—or a 50-minute walk—from campus. This was far too inconvenient for me, so I requested a reassignment.

As my travel date approached, I still hadn't received a response from Purdue Residences. This made it difficult to finalize other arrangements, as my meal plan and transportation from the airport to Purdue depended on my housing assignment. Since I wasn't sure where I would be staying, I couldn't even purchase my plane ticket. Eventually, I decided to buy the ticket first, figuring that if I didn't secure a dorm, I would stay in a hotel.

Just two days before my flight, I finally received a letter from Purdue Residences confirming that they had successfully reassigned me to a dorm on campus. With this settled, I was able to sign up for a meal plan, as it was linked to my housing contract. The last step was booking my shuttle from the airport to Purdue. The drive was about three hours, so I researched the routes and the correct drop-off location. Despite the challenges along the way, everything eventually worked out.

### **Exchange period**

#### Process of arrival

I signed up for a student orientation program called Boiler Gold Rush, one of the top student orientation programs in the United States. Unfortunately, my flight was delayed in Taiwan, causing me to miss my connecting flight, the start of the program, and my scheduled dorm check-in. The program was divided into two parts: one for international students, which later merged with the domestic student orientation. It was the perfect opportunity to meet new people and adjust to my new environment.

During the international student portion, I connected with many exchange students, which gave me a sense of belonging right away. This was where I met several valuable friends, many of whom I still keep in touch with today. The program was well-structured, featuring guest speakers and sessions that provided essential knowledge about the university. We learned about campus resources, academic expectations, cultural adjustments, and even fun traditions at Purdue. This orientation also helped us get around campus, so we could be prepared for the first day of class and not get lost.

Purdue is a large public university with an expansive main campus—so big that it has its own airport, fire department, police department, and health center. The orientation program helped me navigate this massive campus and better understand the resources available to students. Through campus tours and interactive activities, I became more familiar with my surroundings and felt more confident about starting my journey at Purdue.

#### Life abroad (includes expenses)

I grew up in Central America, so attending university in the U.S. felt much more familiar than studying in Asia. From the moment I arrived at Purdue, everything fell into place. The college experience I had dreamed of in high school became a reality this semester. The environment, the people, and the food were everything I had hoped for.

One of the things I loved most about Purdue was the classes. The way professors conducted their courses made me eager to learn more. I was so motivated by the professors that I earned a straight A in a junior-level course in a field where I was just a beginner. Because of this, earning straight A's and achieving a 3.93/4.0 GPA didn't feel difficult—it came naturally in an environment that truly inspired me. I believe Purdue had the ability to bring out the best version of me, and for the first time in a long while, I felt genuinely happy.

My living expenses in the U.S. were significantly higher than what I was used to. The city bus, which was my main mode of transportation around Purdue, was free for students, so my biggest expense was food. I had signed up for a meal plan that covered seven meals a week, but since I didn't have a kitchen, I had to eat out for the rest of my meals. Each meal outside cost a minimum of \$15 USD, roughly 500 NTD, and with the added tipping culture in the U.S., dining out quickly became expensive.

Because the cost of living was so high, I rarely traveled to other cities or countries. Just getting out of town was expensive—transportation to the nearest big city or airport cost \$60 USD (1,990 NTD) one way, meaning a round trip would be \$120 USD (3,980 NTD) every time I wanted to leave. On average, my lowest monthly expenses were around \$780 USD (25,900 NTD), but in some months, my spending reached as high as \$1,300 USD (43,165 NTD). This does not include the cost of my meal plan.

#### Traveling to Canada

The only time I traveled abroad was during Thanksgiving break. We had a full week, so I decided to visit my high school friend who was in Canada. For this, I needed Purdue's ISS office (International Students & Scholars) to sign a I94 form to leave the country and re-enter. It was a quick process online.

## **Gained Knowledge and Suggestions**

This experience has taught me a lot, but mostly this contrasted the learning environment and campus life from Taiwan. I feel extremely privileged to have spent a semester attending Purdue, and I am glad I spent most of my time learning new things, rather than traveling. Although I would've loved to travel more, but spending my time in class has helped me with my future.

After a semester at Purdue, I discovered new interests, such as the Speech Pathology field. I was so motivated that I wanted to pursue a master's degree in Speech Pathology. Unfortunately, a graduate degree in this field required an undergraduate in the same field, which does not align with mine. Although things did not go as my initial plan, I still decided to pursue a master's degree in human resources management at Purdue.

This experience has taught me a lot, especially the contrast between the learning environment and campus life in Taiwan and the US. I feel incredibly privileged to have spent a semester at Purdue, and I am grateful that I dedicated most of my time learning rather than traveling. While I would have loved to travel more places. Prioritizing my studies has shown great benefits in my future.

During my time at Purdue, I discovered new academic interest, particularly in the field of Speech Pathology. I was so motivated that I even considered pursuing a master's degree in this field. However, I soon realized that a graduate degree in Speech Pathology requires an undergraduate background in the same field, which does not align with my studies. Although this was not part of my ideal plan, I remained determined to further my education and decided to pursue a master's degree in human resources management at Purdue.

## Attachments

