

# 113-1 東吳大學赴外交換心得

交換學校：UC Berkeley



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Studying abroad should be a significant educational opportunity to experience the differences in culture, interact and make relations with people from all over the world, and subject and hold myself accountable for new experiences; however, for me, it was the start of my anxiety that turned this experience to the most unforgettable months of my life. I remember everything like it was yesterday: the packing, the emotional farewells, and the heavy weight on my chest as I stepped onto the plane that would take me across the world and start a journey solely on my own.

From a young age, I've always been the independent child in my family, taking on my own responsibilities, but this time, I realized that I am truly solely on my own. As I stepped into a new role as a Berkeley student, I realized that the values we have are vastly different in comparison to the "Berkeley Mentality." For one, I remember arriving at all my lectures early on the first day just to have the class start 10 minutes later than the agreed-upon time. I sat on my chair with lecture notes opened and ready to start the day; looking around, I saw not only merely one-third of the students had arrived, but also the professor was still not present as the clock reached 3:08 for my 3 pm (please refer to figure 1). Exiting my 3 pm lecture, the campus was kissed by the golden hour of the Bay Area sunset, with the sky tainted with a dash of pink, orange, and the kind of blue that you will only see in a cartoon. Up the hills, you can see perfectly clear of Sather's tower, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Greek theater, all painted with an oddly harmonious blue and orange. The busy lights of San Francisco and students rushing home from class are all juxtaposed with the seemingly serene scenery (figure 2). I paused, admiring the view, gently breathed in the fresh air, and strolled back to my "home" for the next six months.

As the semester progressed, deadlines, midterms, and finals piled up. Stress among students is rising, but the university was kind enough to arrange paw patrols to relieve students' anxiety. Every Monday, around 3 pm, I wander around Upper Sproul just to meet the cutest boy, Trooper: a great Pyrenees (figure 3). His gentle licks as I pet him, the softness of his fur, and the stank he gave off all made the 20-minute walk down the Upper Sproul worth it. I didn't realize it back then, but now, looking back, I know that Berkeley, in my heart, was no longer referred to as "Their university" or "The university" but MY university.

As I found myself fully immersed in Berkeley, I started going to what was referred to as the "Big Games" of the semester. Even though I don't recall my first Berkeley game anymore, I remember my nerves jumping and my heart skipping a beat every time the opposing university scored a touchdown (figure 4). But to me, the most memorable part of the Berkeley game experience was a long-standing rivalry with our nemesis, Stanford. In the first half of the game, I was so nervous to the point where I could not sit still. I cheered and chanted until my lungs gave out, as did

everyone else. I guess the atmosphere levitating from the audience worked because we somehow won again in the last second (figure 5). As we exited the stadium as champions, I beamed with a school pride I had never felt before.

It is not only the campus that is stunning; the mountains surrounding the campus left a very impressionable memory in my heart. What is referred to as “The Big C” is one of the most popular date sites in Berkeley. As we climbed up the hills, we saw the Oakland marina, Alcatraz, and the ships that were far, far away (figure 6). Finally, I was used to my “home” here in Berkeley, but time had passed faster than I could ever imagined. I find myself saying the words “I’m going home” as December and January approaches, which feels extremely weird because I thought I *was* home.

Although my time here was ending, the final month was not wasted. I finally visited the Golden Gate Bridge, with the red paint almost peeling off; I stood near the landmark of San Francisco, admiring the sunset view that turned the bright red bridge into a shade of black and orange (figure 7). Before realities slapped me in the face, I pushed my dreams a little further and visited Chase Center to cheer on the historically significant game of my team: Warriors versus Mavericks. The stadium was filled with cheers and the pride of San Francisco, and as we won the game, Curry's memory of scoring almost every 3-pointer will remain the proudest memory in my heart (figure 8).

The day finally came, my return date, and I did not shed any tears. But the baggage I had to carry back to Taiwan felt like air compared to the emotional baggage I have for leaving somewhere so familiar, so *homey*. As I prepared myself to face my realities, I realized that this year, this semester, I had no regrets. All I could think about on my plane back to Taiwan was the memories I’d created here with the people I met. And even though Berkeley, to me, was temporary, it will forever remain a big part of my life. And I will forever consider myself a Berkeley girl.

Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

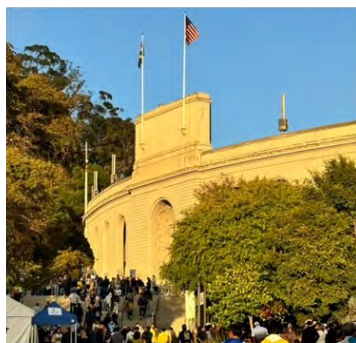


Figure 5.

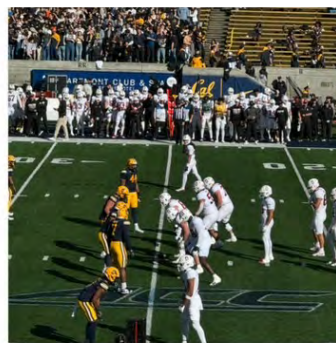


Figure 6.



Figure 7.

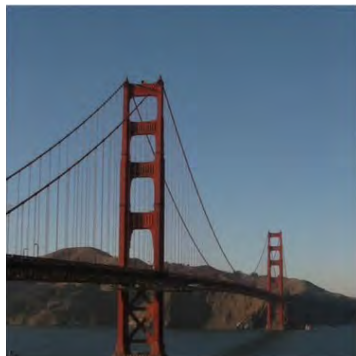


Figure 8.

