



UU Study Abroad Report Form

	Contact info available at the IO.
faculty/college	School of Social Sciences
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Undergraduate Exchange

destination city & country	Irvine, California, USA
name university abroad	University of California, Irvine
start date	15 / 09 / 2022
end date	20 / 12 / 2022

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	<p>Prepare for a lot of stress with the visa application, your patience will be tested, but remember that it is all worth it in the end and it always works out.</p> <p>Application to university went fairly smooth, I was admitted to University of California and was allowed to submit a top 3. Unfortunately, I was not placed at 1 of my 3 preferences, which was really bummed. In hindsight, I am super happy with my placement at UC Irvine!</p>
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The help from UU was excellent!
academic preparation	I did not specifically prepare for this
language preparation	I did not prepare specifically for this, except that I had to take a Duolingo test to demonstrate my English level. Duolingo was allowed due to the Corona situation. Normally, a TOEFL or IELTS test is the most common. About these tests, I heard that they require quite a bit of preparation.
finances	California is a very expensive state, so make sure you take this into account! I worked a lot beforehand and left my duo on, so I only just made it in terms of finances. Count on needing about 2000 euros per month to cover all costs (flights not included). I did do a lot of trips, and afterwards I travelled for 6 weeks to Hawaii and Panama, so if you skip this you need less money off course.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	I went to UCI as a universitywide student, so I could choose all kinds of different subjects and I ended up following Courses in American politics, law, international relations and environmental sciences.
academic quality of education activities	



Level is slightly lower than UU, but there are more deadlines/assignments so I find the intensity comparable to UU.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
In the student centre you can ask all your questions, and there is also an international centre you can visit.
transfer of credits
Count on a credit from UCI being equivalent to 1.33 Dutch credits. The transfer of credits took a bit long, but that was no problem.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

At the beginning, you have a welcome picnic, this is where I would definitely go, as this is the first time to meet everyone. This is also where I met the people who later became my best friends. Expect lots of Asians, Spaniards and Italians, few Dutch.

Later you have more orientation activities, I visited some of these as it helped in meeting new people.

accommodation

This is where I made the wrong choice. I chose not to live on campus, but in an apartment complex 5 km away from UCI. I also paid way too much money for this. I would definitely recommend living on campus though, as all the international students live here and so this is where you will chill out most often. Examples of campus locations are Vista del Campo and Arroyo Vista. You pay around \$600-1000 per month here, depending on private room/shared room. These are good prices for California.

leisure & culture

Living in Irvine is great, many people say it is one of the best places in America to live. It is also relatively safe here, you won't see homeless people anywhere and there is hardly any crime, especially compared to Berkeley/LA.

You're in Irvine about 15 min from Newport Beach, one of the most beautiful beaches in California. I used to come here every week or so. Other beautiful beaches include Laguna Beach, Huntington and Corona del Mar (campfire!). I soon had some friends with a car and otherwise we often took Ubers.

Tips for nightlife: Baja Sharkeez (every Thursday), The Bungalow, Woodys Wharf, Frat houses, Halloween partys, etc etc.

As mentioned, I recommend taking as many trips as possible! I've been to Las Vegas for a weekend, San Diego, LA/Hollywood a few times, Joshua Tree, Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Horseshoe bend, Route 66, Monument Valley. From LAX you also fly cheap to Hawaii, I went there with 10 friends and this was really great, definitely recommended! I would also definitely visit some sports games (SoFi Stadium)!

Furthermore, you get to know new people super fast. Therefore, you don't have to worry about this. American people are super hospitable and interested, you will quickly notice how easily you make contact with these people. In addition, you will automatically gravitate towards the other (European) exchange students.

suggestions/tips

I think that I mentioned everything already.



CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

100% yes! I am extremely happy with my placement at UC Irvine. The university campus looks amazing, the facilities are good and the weather couldn't be better. Almost every day I still think back to my time at Irvine, I miss it.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

The regular clichés: say 'yes' to everything and everyone, don't just try to study but above all enjoy yourself, because I think there are few places where life is as good as in Irvine!



faculty/college	Humanities
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Media and Culture

destination city & country	Irvine, CA / The United States of America
how did you travel to and from your destination?	Direct flight from Amsterdam to LAX, then travel by car to Irvine.
name university abroad	The University of California - Irvine
start date	06 / 01 / 2020 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	12 / 06 / 2020 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

I missed the original deadline in December 2018, because my priorities were with my thesis at the time. Because I also applied the year before, I knew UU also facilitates application to remaining places, that were not filled during the first round. So when in February 2019 I curiously checked the list of remaining places, I noticed that a few were still available for the University of California (my dream university) and I raced to get my application done ASAP. In my experience from the year before, I knew that it can be a lot of work to make sure you have all of the required documents, however I was able to gather everything and get accepted within a week. (I would not recommend waiting for remaining places, however if you missed the first round, they may offer you a great opportunity!)

After I got accepted by UU, you still have to start your application to UCEAP, where you need even more documents, so be prepared. Again you have to motivate your decision and choose 3 of the 9 campuses available. Being a media major, I of course applied to UCLA, but UCI was my second choice. I later learned that you will be placed accordingly to which UC campus has enough spaces available for students from your major. However, looking back I could not be happier with my placement at UCI!

counselling & support at Utrecht University

My year was mainly supported by X and she was incredibly understanding and dedicated to helping students on any difficulties regarding the exchange. Even though we sometimes got some ridiculous requests from UC, she was able to figure it out with us and make the whole application process so much more doable.

academic preparation

Besides the GPA requirement, you would not need any specific academic preparation. As long as you don't take any really advanced classes outside of your major, you should be fine! However if you do not meet the GPA requirement yet, I would recommend starting on improving this in advance, as you need to meet it at the time of application.

language preparation



As we all learn English in high school, I don't think you would need to prepare for this, however it definitely helps if you took any classes taught in English at UU. You do need to proof your sufficiency by taking an assessment like IELTS, TOEFL or Cambridge. If you have a little more money to spare, I would recommend taking the latter, as it is valid indefinitely. IELTS and TOEFL are more affordable but also only valid for respectively four and two years. If you go through all the effort to take a test, why not get an assessment you can use for the remainder of your career?

finances

The UC system does require you to have a minimum amount of savings available, to be able to get accepted. They want to make sure you will be able to support yourself. I am not sure how much they asked for, but I think it might be anywhere between \$5.000 and \$10.000, which is a lot. Be prepared for this!

Living in California is really expensive! The average living cost is way higher than in the Netherlands, so you will need a bigger budget each month to sustain yourself! Renting on- or off-campus quickly amounts to \$900-1300 each month. Take into account that taxes are never included in the prices and public transportation is scarce. And of course you will want to do a lot of activities – I mean you are near Newport, Huntington, LA, Joshua Tree, San Diego, Las Vegas – so be prepared to bring some extra fundings!!

(also don't forget the amount you need to spend to get there: you need to meet vaccination requirements, language assessment, pay for the VISA, buy plane tickets, get insurance, pay to get to campus, etc)

(interrupted) STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

welcome & orientation programme

Because I arrived for the Winter quarter, there weren't that many welcome activities. We did have an orientation meeting, where they explained to us what to expect and then took us for a tour around campus. Even though this was not super exciting, I did get to meet a lot of other international students, and I met most of my friends here! There was also a breakfast during the first week of classes, but because of mandatory attendance, I could not be present for this.

You could also choose to sign up for a buddy program, where the university pairs you up with a local student, whom will be able to help you with any unanswered questions. I would really recommend you to do this!! It can be quite an overwhelming experience and difficult to meet people, so having someone to turn to, makes integrating into the culture much easier and fun! If you are lucky you are paired with really nice active people, who will want to introduce you to loads of fun activities.

study programme (content and organisational issues)

Compared to UU, there are so many different fields and classes to choose from, it can be difficult to be able to make a decision, but they really add to your curriculum. Take your time well in advance to orientate which are available and which ones you want to apply to, because you get assigned a very specific time window within which you can apply.

Prerequisites!!! That was the main issue I had when it came to applying for classes. Because I had already completely all of my classes from my bachelor, I wanted to gain access to more advanced classes within my major. WebReg (similar to Osiris) does not allow you to sign up if you have not completed the basic classes at UCI. However it was not easy to overcome the prerequisites, as no one seemed to be able to know how to lift them technically. I did not figure out who I had to contact until well into the first quarter, but this forced me to take classes outside of my major, which looking back I could not be more grateful for.

academic quality of education activities



I (but also all of my friends on exchange) was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the classes. Because the university is a little less well-known, you get most of your classes taught by respected professors themselves (not as many TA's like in UCLA), whom are really dedicated to their craft. I don't know if I was just lucky with the classes I chose, but all of my classes were really engaging and the professors all made an effort to get to know the students.

I do have to say, when it comes to knowledge on anything outside of the US, you do have a significant head start and sometimes it may feel like they are trying to teach you some basic facts about the world history, but that should not be difficult to look past to.

Finally, from my experience the work load seemed a lot heavier than at UU, as I often had a quiz per week for each class, sometimes also an essay due and reading an entire book per class per week, besides midterms and finals.

transfer of credits

I am still currently waiting on my final results and for my transcript to get delivered to UU.

CORONAVIRUS CONSEQUENCES

support guidance of host university

As the virus broke out halfway through my exchange, there was a lot of ambiguity on the severity of the situation. Therefore during the end of February – beginning of March, we were left with many unanswered questions, because it was simply too early for UCI to able to provide us with answers. This is of course understandable, but we often did not even receive replies when it came to (travel) advice on going back home.

In general we did regularly receive emails with the latest updates and some recourses that were made available to us. At some point they announced that all classes for the Spring Quarter would be taught online, but they still advised all international students to remain in the U.S., because of imminent VISA complications. They also seemed to promise however, that the program should be made available abroad as well, so we would be able to return to our home countries if we preferred to do so. They could not guarantee access to anything beyond that.

support guidance of home university

The response of UU was relatively late, as the Netherlands had only been actively dealing with the virus a few weeks after the first cases were confirmed in California, which is understandable. A couple of these early cases were reported only ten minutes away from our campus. Because of the uncertainty of the situation some other UU students reached out to everyone in the U.S. and made a group chat, where we discussed the situation with each other.

A little while after that we received a general email from UU recommending students abroad to come back. After a few days, we received a very pressing email from the international office, urging us all to come back. From this point on, we were able to receive a lot of support on travel advice, financial support on returning home and also regular check ups when we finally got home. I honestly don't believe there could have been a better response, in the way the pandemic played out.

online offer and quality of digital courses

I would say the range of online classes was still pretty decent. Most classes were still being taught, even though the mode of education and testing did change. I was lucky enough that only one of my classes got cancelled



(because it was a dance class). The quality of the classes was really dependent on the effort the professors were willing to put into them. Some classes did not lose any quality, because the only difference would be the only environment, but all lectures and discussions remained the same. Sadly because I am a film major, my classes on production and directing were made much more challenging to follow remotely. I was not able to bring the required materials home with me (like camera and necessary equipment) and I do think it affected the quality of the classes.

Because my exchange was at the University of California, there was a significant time difference. Most of my classes this quarter were anywhere between 18:00 earliest, to 7:00 latest. This is of course anywhere from ideal if you want to participate. Unfortunately not all professors have been equally understanding of this time difference and deduct participation points for not being able to be present and do not want to provide you with the slides from the class. This leaves you to feel like you are studying the topic on your own. Other professors have luckily been quite accommodating and record classes (beforehand), so you can watch them at your own convenience. There is no way of knowing beforehand whether your professor will be more understanding, so I do think this is important to keep in mind for students planning to do a remote exchange with a time difference. However if you are highly (academically) motivated, this should not form too big of a problem.

suggestions/tips on digital exchange

I would recommend students to take online classes abroad, if they are mostly motivated by academic experience. From my own experience this past quarter, I can say that the whole social and cultural aspects are not really present from a distance. Of course you do experience the culture of a different academic system, but you barely have contact with others. If possible, I would recommend students who also have other motivations to go abroad, to postpone their exchange.

I feel like doing classes online might be ideal for students who are a little anxious about staying in a different country, because they can experience it from the comfort of their own home. Especially when classes are pre-recorded, it is really convenient you can watch them whenever suits you best, though you do have to be disciplined enough to keep up with all the material yourself. Finally, if I have to compare the quality of the classes to my in-person classes in the first quarter, I have to say it depends on the willingness of the professor to adapt. A pro of having classes virtually, is that you can still have discussions on the materials, to offer you different perspectives. (Though the time zone is a key factor here.) A con to the pre-recorded classes, is that you do miss out on the discussions and the classes can then be a little less in depth, as one might expect.

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

YES! I know UCI is probably not a common first choice (I had never even heard from it until a year and a half ago), but I would highly recommend it to anyone! Its location is ideal in SoCal, you are really close to LA (so don't fret if you didn't get into UCLA), San Diego and Las Vegas. At the same time there is also much more to SoCal like Catalina Island, Joshua Tree Park, Newport Beach, Laguna, Anaheim (Disneyland!) and Huntington beach. You will definitely get to see more of the area, opposed to when you go to a destination in the middle of a big city. If your main incentive is to go to (Southern) California, you will definitely not miss out here!

The part I came to appreciate from going to UCI the most, is probably the laid back vibe in the middle of everything I mentioned before. There is a beautiful park at the heart of the campus, so if you want as soon as you leave your classes, you can just sit out there and relax in the sun. The bus system on campus is pretty decent and the University Town Centre has everything you could need: several supermarkets, food places from



every type of cuisine, a very typical American cinema, postal services, a gym, nail salon, hair dressers, a cinema and plenty of bubble tea (which is a thing in the area).

So all in all, I would recommend this destination to anyone who is not necessarily looking to stay in a big city, because the area is so diverse. Especially if you don't mind to have a little peace every now and then, this is a great destination. However you can really make it as eventful as you want!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

It is probably important to keep in mind that Irvine is not a typical student city and there are probably less activities hosted than on average US campuses, BUT I do think it is partly your own incentive on how you want to spend your exchange. The International Centre, Student Association and Anteater Recreation Centre each host several fun trips each quarter, so they are definitely worth checking out. Additionally, there are plenty of student organisations and frats/sororities you could join for activities and don't forget about the ARC (it has a swimming pool accessible to all students). I was very fortunate that my faculty hosted a lot of media related events as well.

As I mentioned before, you should go to orientation activities and sign up to get a buddy, because those are great places to meet people who are going through the experience as well. I was probably really lucky that I met the people that I did, because we got along really well and ended up doing activities all over California. Additionally I chose to live in VDC, which was maybe a little expensive, but close to campus and had great facilities (pool with hot tub, a gym, community centre, computer room where you can print, mail service and also a lot of free activities). My roommates were American and were able to help me figure out how to get around. I got along with them really well too and ended up spending a lot of time with them and since they had a car, get to other places more easily. They also took me to plenty of parties and bars, so I do think it's maybe about knowing where to go.

Finally, you will still experience American culture, as UCI has a basketball and baseball team and a cheer and dance squad. There are plenty of fairs (yes with the classic sorority/frat stands) and even a homecoming week with a crowning. And do not forget about all the amounts of the fast food. So if you are looking for all of that, but also the possibility to make your exchange as active as you want, go to UCI and Zot Zot Zot!



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Family name:	xxx
First name:	xxx
Student number:	xxx
Faculty/college:	U.S.E
Level:	X bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Economics and Business Economics

Destination city & country	Irvine, California
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	University of California, Irvine (UCI) – EAP program
Purpose of exchange	X study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	16/09/2017
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	30/03/2018

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

I thought the application process was very time consuming. After the deadline it took at least another three months before I knew I got officially accepted to UCI. The application itself wasn't a lot of effort. Once I knew I wanted to apply for the EAP program it was only a matter of writing my letter of motivation.

Counselling/support at home university:

Before the application process I had a few questions about the EAP program in general; about the different campuses and about the requirements and selection procedure itself. The international office answered these questions sufficiently and this helped me to make a campus selection. I was happy I started my orientation far in advance because it took time to arrange an appointment with the international office.

However, once I was accepted by UCI and started preparing for my departure, I received very little help from my home university. I had a lot of questions about the organizational matters before my departure, such as housing, visa, insurance, vaccines etc. Because every campus organizes these things differently, other selected EAP students were not of much help. I would have preferred if the University of Utrecht had provided more guidance in this.



Academic preparation:

Since I enrolled for an Economics major I did not need any additional academic preparation. The courses during my bachelor satisfied the prerequisites for the Economics courses at UCI.

Language preparation:

My bachelor study Economics and Business Economics is taught entirely in English. Once I had an official approval of this I did not need to take an additional English language test.

Finances:

On average, the living costs in California are quite expensive; rent, food, study material but also activities such as amusement parks or cinemas. Besides these general expenses during my exchange, I also needed to get specific vaccines and a VISA in order to enter the US. Because of this, I had already spent a lot of money before my exchange had even started.

Also, since I wasn't eligible to waive the mandatory university health insurance (the university didn't accept my Dutch health insurance), I had no other option than to pay for the university health insurance (USHIP), which was very expensive.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

It wasn't easy to enrol for the courses at UCI and I noticed that a lot of other international students had problems with this as well. First of all, most of the time it was only possible to enrol for courses that were within the department of your major. Some courses were restricted for specific majors. This was disappointing sometimes, because of this restriction I wasn't allowed to enrol for some courses that I found interesting.

Also, for most upper-level courses you were required to show that you had the prerequisites. You had to email this proof to the professor of the department before you were allowed to enrol. This was a timely process and some courses were already full before you had received your permission to enrol.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

Compared to the courses in my bachelor, the courses I took at UCI were relatively easy. At the same time, education in the US involves a lot more homework assignments, group projects, papers and presentations. Even though the content was easy most of the time, these assignments or group projects were time consuming.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

I did not experience any problems during my exchange for which I needed to contact my counsellor. In case I had questions I could ask fellow (international) students, who were always able to help me out. I know that some students who experienced (more severe) problems or difficulties were very much helped by the EAP contact person and received the right counselling if necessary. UCI provides a lot of resources to make sure of all students wellbeing.

Transfer of credits:

The transfer of credits was an easy process. The international office at UCI sent my transcript to the international office and I received an email when this was received. I was only responsible for



picking up my transcript at the international office and delivering this at the student office of my faculty. Because all US universities use a different grading system (A/B/C), the Board of Examiners had to officially transfer my grades to the Dutch grading system. Within a few weeks my grades were transferred and uploaded in Osiris.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

UCI provided lot of opportunities to get to know the campus, clubs, and other international students in the first week of the quarter. For example, the first few days I attended the welcome picnic, breakfast and the involvement fair. These were nice opportunities to meet the other international students and I made most of my friends during this first week.

During the year, the international office at UCI (run by students) initiates trips and hang-outs to get international and local students in touch with each other. They also organize interactive workshops in which students can exchange stories about culture differences and habits across borders, and an English conversation program for students who are having difficulties adapting to English.

Accommodation:

Many international students resided in the on-campus housing accommodations. These accommodations had shared rooms, a communal living area and some of them provided meal plans. However, since I was only staying for two quarters instead of the full year, I wasn't eligible for these housing options. Most spots were reserved for students that stayed the full academic year. I was lucky to find a room off-campus via the UCI housing website, where I signed up and was eventually messaged by a girl who went on exchange to Paris for the same period of time. I subleased a shared room with three other girls in an 5-person apartment, which was only a five minute walk from the university campus. Surprisingly, this apartment was closer to the university than most on-campus accommodations.

Leisure/culture:

During my exchange I had a lot of leisure time. My courses were easy so I spent less time studying compared to what I used to do at home. Because of this, I decided to join one of the club sports. During the week, I spent my time on campus, attending my lectures and sport practices. This left me time to make short (cultural) trips in the weekends. I wasn't used to the long distances in the US and had underestimated the accessibility of the public transport, which was why organizing (weekend) trips was sometimes harder than expected. Next to the short trips during the academic quarter, I travelled during public holidays and during Christmas break.

Suggestions/tips:

Make sure to start preparing for your departure in time. It costs a lot of time to receive your VISA files and to make an appointment at the US embassy. Also start looking for housing as soon as you have received your initial offer.

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

I would certainly recommend this destination to others. Irvine has a perfect location; very central



to many destinations if you want to explore California, such as Los Angeles, San Diego and Las Vegas (which is "only" a 5 hour drive away). There is even an airport nearby, which makes it even more easy to travel. Also, the weather in South California is great throughout the year and the campus is relatively close to many beaches, which are all very nice to spend your leisure time!

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

Since Irvine is a very suburban area, it is much more likely to get bored of the area and surroundings. I would recommend prospective EAP students to actively engage in activities/(sport) clubs, sororities/fraternities, student life etc. There is really not much to do in the area so being proactive and engage with other students really helps to make the most of your experience abroad.



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Utrecht University, Geoscience
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Human Geography & Planning

Destination city & country	Irvine CA, United States
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	University of California Irvine (UCI)
Purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	13/09/2015
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	08/01/2016

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

I had been looking for host universities in the United States for over a year when my eye landed on the University of California. I applied for Berkeley, UCLA and UCI and (even though there were some technical difficulties) I was finally placed at UCI – And I am very happy about it.

Counselling/support at home university:

The whole process was supported by Ingrid Dijkstra from the International Office in the Netherlands.

Academic preparation:

I made sure to have a 7.0 / 3.0 GPA.

Language preparation:

I have had bilingual education and I've spent months abroad in Canada before going to the US so my English was already sufficient. I did take the TOEFL test (as that was a prerequisite).

Finances:

I had known that I wanted to study abroad for a long time so I had been saving up for years, and I closed a loan with DUO.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

I am very interested in earth sciences and want to do a master on climate change, which is why I chose my courses accordingly. The courses were challenging, yet organized extremely well and definitely doable; I scored an A+, A and A- on my courses.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

I thought the academic quality of the lectures and tutorials was very high, even challenging. However, the midterms and endterms were a little too easy according to me, concerning the fact



that the material discussed in class was way more intense and elaborated.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

Kim Henne has been of great help and was always prepared to help international students.

Transfer of credits:

Has not yet been completed, however my grades translate to a 8.5 for an A+, a 8 for an A and a 7,5 for an A-. This seems rather low concerning the fact that I scored 98/100, 95/100 and 93/100 respectively on these courses, yet it's understandable as our level of education and especially finals is way higher over here in Utrecht.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

Was awesome, there were a lot of activities organized for international students which has enabled me and my friends to meet lots of new international people (who I'm still close friends with).

Accommodation:

I found my room through the UCI Housing facebook page. My roommates were amazing, even though I had to get used to sharing a room with 2 others (3 in total). In the end, it was amazing, and I'm still very close friends with my roommates.

Leisure/culture:

All my roomies were Mexican, so I have definitely learned a lot of the Mexican culture (food, music, etc).

Suggestions/tips:

If you want to stay in LA relatively cheaply and with international students/people I can recommend USA Hostels Hollywood / Samesun Hostel Hollywood or in Venice. As for Irvine, a great tip is to search for housing through facebook and comment on every single attractive post. I found my room within a day.

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

Yes. Even though I was a little bit disappointed at first that I had been placed at Irvine as I hoped to study at UCLA or Berkeley, in the end I could not have wished for a better university! The campus is extremely peaceful and lovely, people are nice, Irvine is incredibly beautiful and much cleaner than a big city such as LA or San Fransisco. Also, it is very easy to travel from Irvine to Los Angeles (55 minutes by train) and to San Diego (1,5 h by train). If you have a car, you can travel anywhere in a short amount of time. Irvine is close to San Clemente and Laguna Beach – both amazing cities. It is nice to be able to live and study in a peaceful, calm environment like Irvine but to be able to go on an adventure in a big city like Los Angeles or San Diego whenever you want.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

I had a lot of time off during my stay at UCI – I only had classes for about 1-2 hours a day. My advice is to choose your classes in the morning like I did, so you have each day off around 11-12 am. Then you still have the whole day to do fun stuff or travel! In my relatively short stay, I have travelled a lot. I have been to San Diego, Los Angeles, Anaheim, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, San Fransisco, Las Vegas, Phoenix, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite and even Vancouver and Vancouver Island in Canada. Try to make friends with people who have a car or rent a car with all your friends



and go on adventures! There are so many beautiful places so closeby. Also, Joshua Tree National Park is only a 1,5 h drive from Irvine (through Palm Springs, Coachella Valley and the desert – a great trip) and is one of the most beautiful places I have been. If you're studying at UCI, UCR, UCLA and other UC campuses nearby in April, you can very easily go to one of the biggest festivals in the world – Coachella. From LA/Irvine it's only a 1,5 h drive.



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Faculty of Law, Economics & Governance
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Economics & Business Economics

Destination city & country	Irvine, United States
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	University of California Irvine
Purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	06/09/2015
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	23/04/2016

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

I can't completely comment on this as I have a US passport, which eased this process a lot for me. This saved me the trouble of getting a VISA and having to hand in a financial declaration. Basically what I've heard from other people is that the process is not hard or difficult, it just takes some time and you have to start early with it. If you start early, you'll be stress-free.

Counselling/support at home university:

Any questions I had were quickly answered by Ingrid. She's very helpful and takes her time to help you out when you're stuck with something about the process.

Academic preparation:

To apply for the University of California in general, your average grad has to be higher than a 7, if I recall correctly. Not too hard. Furthermore, you have to take a TOEFL test. This test is not hard at all and if you speak basic English you'll easily manage. Just make sure you start early because the wait times can be long!

Language preparation:

It's all English so it really isn't too hard getting around. If you manage to get a good score on the TOEFL test you'll be absolutely fine. Your English will majorly improve while staying in the States cause you'll be forced to speak English all the time!

Finances:

It's pretty expensive. I saved up quite a lot myself and was lucky enough my parents were willing to contribute a little. I do recommend bringing more money than you actually need (or think you need after calculating). There's going to be stuff you'll be wanting to do that you did not plan on and in that case you don't want to be limited due to finances!

Study/placement abroad period



Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

It was good. The study programme honestly wasn't that different. Basically I had to study books and papers for exams and had to write papers myself. It's what we usually do in the Netherlands too. I have a hard time finding out if the workload was the same as at Utrecht University. I was very motivated on my study abroad so I worked a lot more than I usually do, which probably made it seem easier. I think that if you manage at UU, you'll manage at UCI too.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The quality was very high. I thought the lecturers were absolutely amazing and very interesting to listen to. I enjoyed it a lot and didn't have any trouble concentrating. Most of the books I had were nice too. They weren't written just for the course but were actually older books in their fields of study, which made them very interesting to read, whilst still being relevant for the course.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

To be honest I did not really look for any counselling or support while abroad, so I can't give any comment.

Transfer of credits:

I did not need any more credits but my Osiris shows I received 24 credits for the three courses I followed abroad. 24 obviously is less than the 30 you could've gotten whilst studying here but I didn't need them anymore so no problem for me.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

I don't recall a big welcome programma. Basically there was a day that started out with a breakfast, which was quite fun. It was a very good opportunity to get to know new people as everybody was very open. Afterwards there was a brief tour around the campus.

Accommodation:

There's a couple of housing complexes around the campus that are usually inhabited by students. There's a facebook group that you can only get access to with a UCI e-mail address (which you'll receive way before you actually leave). This facebook group is very convenient for finding good housing. All of the complexes are very nice. Be prepared to share a room though, unless you want to pay a lot!

Leisure/culture:

The culture isn't that different, although there are a few small differences. Except friendly (sometimes fake), talkative and open people. Also, be prepared to meet people that do not have a clue where the Netherlands actually is. But in general the culture is quite the same.

Irvine is really boring. There's almost nothing to do and a party scene is basically non-existent.

Make friends, preferably friends that own cars, so you can leave Irvine together. There's a lot of cool stuff around (go to the beaches!) and there's a lot of beautiful nature around. Go to the beaches for partying, the parties there are really chill. And make sure you visit some real American house parties, they're exactly like the movies!

Most of the apartment complexes come with a pool and hot tub, so you can chill out there too. The library facilities are amazing as is the school campus itself. Also, the gym area is huge and really nice, but very busy too.



Suggestions/tips:

Make sure you have your weekends free! There's so much cool stuff to do. Visit San Diego, San Francisco and everything in between. Go to Yosemite National park, go to Grand Canyon. I would use every weekend because before you know it it's over. As long as you plan your studying you'll be able to go on amazing weekend trips. Following this, I would advise, if at all possible, keeping Monday and/or Friday free. You can go on longer trips in that case.

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

Yeah I would. It's located in a beautiful part of California. Irvine itself may be boring.. But I actually didn't mind. It let me focus on my studies more. I still did loads of awesome stuff in the weekends and it's still possible to go out once or twice a week as the party places are close by!

The quality of the education was amazing, I was very impressed by it.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

Leave the house any moment you have the chance. For relaxing, reading, studying, whatever. California is beautiful, experience it!



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	REBO (Economics & Business Economics)
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Bsc. Economics & Business Economics

Destination city & country	Irvine (CA), United States
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	University of California, Irvine (UCI)
Purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	31/08/2015
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	24/12/2015

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

In order to be able to apply to any UC campus, you need to have sufficient GPA. Therefore, I had to make sure my grades were sufficient. However, for me this was not a problem. Furthermore, a motivation letter was needed, a financial plan and courses you would like to follow. All this was needed only for the selection at UU (about 40% of the students were accepted since demand for an exchange at UC is higher than the availability). When I got through the selection of UU, my motivational letter, financial plan and course plan was presented to UC EAP, who placed me at a campus. UCI was not in my top three, however, it was a good choice after all.

Then, I had to make a course plan that applied to UCI and I was asked to do some other general preparation (with strict deadlines!!).

Counselling/support at home university:

All the questions I had were answered by Ingrid Dijkstra. She knows everything that is concerned with the exchange and helps you wherever help is needed. Furthermore she gives students the opportunity to share their experiences with other students and arranges several meetings with extensive hand-outs. A lot has to be prepared in order to study in the US, it is a hassle, but it's definitely worth it (she said this over and over again, and it's so true).

Academic preparation:

Make sure your GPA is sufficient. Enroll for the courses you wish to follow and e-mail professors in case a prerequisite is needed (don't worry about this too much though. If you haven't made up your mind yet, there's plenty of time to take care of this when you arrive at the university)

Language preparation:

I did not have to take a test since my entire bachelor is in English.



Finances:

The US is expensive, UU needs a financial plan on December first, but this is just to set the people who are actually seriously intending to go abroad, apart from the people who don't even want to put any effort in applying. Anyway, make sure you have enough money for housing, food, campus fees (which are ridiculous) and fun things!

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

The study programme is similar to the UU time slots. Periods are around 10 weeks and often the structure of the courses are quite similar as well. The only difference however, is they have only 3 periods a year, instead of four. In these 3 periods you are expected to do the same amount of work as we do. Luckily, the work load turned out to be less in comparison to UU. I took 4 courses and an individual study, had a lot of spare time (level was also a bit lower in my opinion), studied well for exams and earned 34 ECTS in 10 weeks, with an A+, 2 A's and an A-.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The quality of education is quite good. The courses are pretty well organized in general and lecturers seemed experienced. However, since in my opinion some of the students lacked behind, they explained every possible detail, sometimes things that are common knowledge.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

It is a bit messy, more question marks appear in comparison to UU. But who to blame? The campus is huge, there's a difference in culture and the university has both similarities and differences when it comes to organizing and structuring certain things. Overall, everything will fall in place.

Transfer of credits:

Just make sure you keep your board of examiners (at UU) up to date about the courses you are following. When you made your final decision when it comes to courses, make sure you communicate them to the board and suggest a level and give them some extra information concerning the course contents. I did all this in time, when I came back I had a tentative approval for all the courses and the credits from the US, I sent this to the board and they put everything in Osiris.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

Even before university, EAP students were introduced to each other. Which made it easier to meet new people. During the programme, we had a lecture from the EAP exchange officer who gave us a lot of relevant information with regard to the program, the study load, the culture etc.

Accommodation:

Accommodation is expensive. Housing on campus in particular is expensive and not the nicest. Therefore, I decided to look a bit further than on campus and found a website where people near the university could place a room for rent without necessarily being involved with the university itself. This way I found a woman who was looking for a roommate, the beautiful house was located about 15 min (by bike) from the campus, I had so much fun, but I was lucky! I paid \$750 a month, which was a great deal for a clean environment.

Leisure/culture:



California is beautiful. Although it is not recommended to travel before the start of your program, I did, and I still don't understand why it is not recommended. Traveling before school started introduced me to the most beautiful places in California (and Utah, and Nevada, and Arizona). It gave me the opportunity to get to know the culture and to explore the places I wanted to go back to when I had the chance (during the weekend for instance).

Suggestions/tips:

Make sure you have enough money. Make sure you inform the board of examiners at UU. Make sure you travel around (I would suggest before university starts). And most important, enjoy the stay. I miss my exchange every time it is raining in the Netherlands.

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

Yes, Irvine is nice. Although there are some cultural differences since about 65% of all students are Asian. And by Asian I do not mean American Asian only, but about 40-50% is from China or Japan. They're nice people, but very different from Europeans. Therefore, it is not the best place to meet new friends. I haven't really met an American friend but my roommate, who was 47 years old (I still talk to her though).

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

No, not really.