

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**

Shibo Peng

Year and semester for exchange

2023, Fall

Exchange university

The University of Texas at Austin

Degree programme

Civil engineering

Hook 'em Horns!

Before departure

When I found that I could have the chance to exchange, USA is the only destination that came up in my mind. Exploring the other side of the Atlantic Ocean is challenging, but also exciting. Because I am a non-EU nationality, applying for the U.S visa required some additional procedure, which might vary depending on one's nationality. Generally, it requires the passport, proof of assets (enough to cover all your spending inside the U.S.), study plan, language test result (I used my previous IELTS score, TOEFL is also accepted). Also, based on the destination, certain vaccine might also be need.



Upon arrival

I arrived the U.S. at the John F. Kennedy International Airport, New York. After a few days of traveling in Manhattan, I flied to Austin. Since I lived in the student dorm, it took me about only a half day to set up everything in my room as there is a Target downstairs. Shortly after my setting up, an opening ceremony was held in front of the UT Tower.

Financials

I got no finial aid from both universities, but I only need to pay the tuition to KTH, which is already a huge aid for me as the tuition of UT is much more expensive than KTH. Other than tuition, a student insurance that cost about 2000 USD is a must if you don't have any other insurance that can cover your health at the U.S. If you purchase the student insurance, a blue insurance card will be available for picking up upon your arrival.

Accommodation

I applied to live at Dobie twenty 21, which is an official student dorm near the campus. With a Target (like the ICA in Sweden I suppose? At least they are both expensive) downstairs, living at Dobie takes only 10 minutes' walk to everywhere inside campus. However, as I lived in a double room with shared bathroom, it's narrow here. A 15 square meter double room cost me a ridiculous 700 USD per month.

For dining, I would highly recommend the meal plan at UT. It cost 2000 USD per semester, and it is unlimited. With the meal plan I can eat at 3 different restaurants that serve various kinds of food. There is not limitation on the number of times you enter these restaurants.



University and studies



As a public university, the campus of UT is large and there are three main dining halls (Kins, J2, Jester city limits) and many small shops inside the campus. The campus has a very beautiful views, and you can see the iconic UT tower everywhere in campus. Before my arrival, I was worried about the safety in the U.S. But it turns that I thought too much. With police officer patrolling, firearms and smoking are restricted inside the campus.

One of the most important cultures of the America college life is their sports, especially, America football. Texas longhorn at UT is one of the best team in the U.S (by the time I wrote the report, we are ranking 4th nationally). If I must recommend something that must do here, it got to be watching a UT football home game! You will feel their

longhorn passion and longhorn spirit.

If the sports make UT distinguished, academic make UT outstanding. As the one of the earliest members of *Public Ivy* list, UT has a very high reputation on their teaching and research. Speaking of my own experience, I would emphasis my study of the computational fluid dynamic (CFD) under the professor Spyros A Kinnas. I was encouraged to study and understand the complex algorithm behind and coding everything by myself. At here, I was guided to discover instead of being taught.

Courses

UT offers lots of course choices. Noticing that as an exchange student, UT register us all as undergrad students, which means we need special approval to select the courses on gradated (master or PhD) level. My choice of courses might be different from common exchange students.

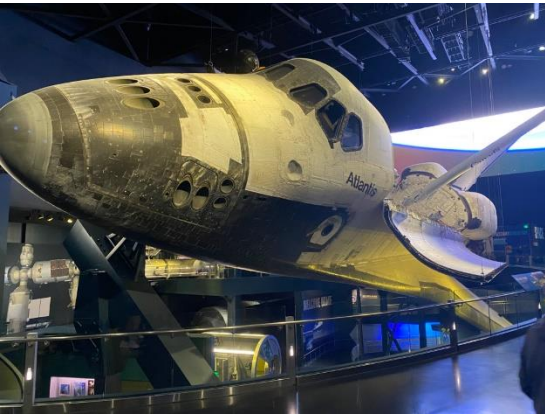
First, I took 2 undergrad upper-level courses: ASE 365 Structure dynamics from Aerospace department and CE 377k Data science in CAEE. For ASE 365, I wrote an email to the Aerospace department and explained why I take the course as a civil engineering major. For CE 377k, this course is actually not published on the course selection website. I got to know this course by the recommendation of the advisors. So, keep in contact with them!

Then I applied to take 2 graduated courses: CE 380T COMPUTATNL ENVIR FLUID MECHS and CE 387T DECISION, RISK, & RELIABILITY. To apply for the graduated courses, I wrote emails to each courses letter separately and explain my intention. I even provided my past transcript to approve my ability of study. Luckily, they were persuaded by me, and I found that my classmates were all PhD students. Be prepared that the graduate courses here as the course content are much more challenging, and some of the graduate courses are open for PhDs (like the courses I took).

If you want an easier life, take undergrad courses please. I had to take a pill of Melatonin to sleep everyday as I was so stressed here...

City and country

Austin is the capital city of the U.S. state of Texas and is known for its vibrant culture, live music scene, and outdoor activities. Nestled in the heart of Texas Hill Country, Austin is famous for its eclectic mix of music festivals, including the renowned South by Southwest (SXSW). The city boasts a thriving tech scene, earning it the nickname "Silicon Hills." With a focus on sustainability and green spaces, Austin offers residents and visitors alike a plethora of parks, trails, and outdoor recreational opportunities. The local cuisine reflects the city's diverse population, featuring a wide range of delicious options from food trucks to upscale restaurants.



Leisure and social activities

Since I was busy with my course works, I don't really have enough time for leisure even at the weekends. I spend the most of my spare time here travelling. I have been to New York, Orlando, Boston and these places will definitely leave you an impressive memory.

Sustainability

Since Texas is a state that is rich in petroleum, its gas price is much cheaper than Sweden. As the result, gas cars here are much more welcomed than the electrical cars. Also, I feel that

the people here didn't value the importance as much as Swedish, as they travel mostly by cars, instead of bicycles or other more sustainable ways (there is even no road that is exclusively for bikes).

Car and flights are the primary travel methods in the U.S. During my stay, I took a lot of flights during my travel inside the U.S. which makes me feel guilty.

Other recommendations and observations

Hook 'em Horns is the chant and hand signal of The University of Texas at Austin. Students, alumni, and fans of the university employ a greeting consisting of the phrase "Hook 'em" or "Hook 'em Horns" and use the phrase as a parting good-bye or as the closing line in a letter or story. You will never regret to choose UT. The 4 months exchanging life here will be your lifetime memory!

