

REFLECTIONS ON MY EXPERIENCE STUDYING ABROAD



You have stuffed your luggage to the brim, hugged your family and friends goodbye, and boarded your flight to an exotic international locale that you will soon call home. How is it? Spending many years obtaining a degree abroad can be one of the most thrilling experiences, but it will not be a complete experience if you do not prepare for the “challenges.” It is readily admitted that time waits for no one. In 2012, I had just graduated from the University of Cambodia and made the choice to continue my journey by pursuing my Master’s Degree at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. Presently, I am moving forward as a doctoral student at

Lindenwood University in Missouri, United States. Life is hard, but I would describe every struggle I have been through to reach where I am standing today as easy. I do love the quotation from Dr. Seuss, “Why fit in when you were born to stand out?” It keeps motivating me to go ahead for what I want to accomplish and seize every opportunity that comes by.

After I graduated from Santhormok High School in Phnom Penh, I applied for scholarships from many universities, and I was lucky enough to be awarded scholarships from 4 universities: Royal University of Law and Economics (RULE), University of Cambodia (UC), International University (IU), and Cambodian Mekong University (CMU). Among these, I selected 2 universities for my bachelor degrees: the Royal University of Law and Economics for the major of Finance and Banking, and the University of Cambodia for the major of English Literature. I started both majors at the same time, which meant I no longer had free time because I had to review lessons for my assignments and exams.

By August 2011, I had completed my Bachelor’s Degree from the Royal University of Law and Economics with the honor of being the #1 student in my class, and I received a job offer from OSK Indochina Securities Limited as a securities representative in September 2011. I had been working there for 3 months when I was promoted to the position of research analyst in the Research Department. Every single day I had to seek for updated information regarding government regulations and the situation of companies involved in the stock market. In addition, I simultaneously accepted another job as a part-time English teacher in CamBright School in the evening; hence, my life was full of work, but it was ultimately worth the effort because it was the first step towards my involvement in the education field. I learned to manage the class effectively for my students, and I realized that being a teacher is not a piece of cake, but it requires patience and the ability to balance your lesson plan with the appropriate teaching techniques and problem solving skills in order to engage the students in learning and inspiring them to achieve their goals.

By 2012, I was awarded the scholarship to pursue my master’s degree at Chulalongkorn University, in Bangkok, Thailand to study Non-Formal Education. The scholarship I received was through a program with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport sponsored by the Thai Princess. Life can become a bit challenging when you move to a place where Thai is the only language used in your daily life, but to cope I took an opportunity to be a teacher’s assistant in the Lifelong Education Department, Faculty of Education. Eventually

I was able to improve my Thai, and became fluent with not only reading, writing, speaking and listening but typing as well. I learned to be more independent in both my studies and work so that I could achieve straight A's (except one B+ that I received in my Statistics class).

In 2013, another opportunity flew in, and I was awarded a scholarship to complete an exchange program at Lindenwood University, in Missouri, United States in the field of adult education or simply called Andragogy. This experience broadened my world; I have developed both my academic and personal understanding, as I gained different perspectives in making decisions for life improvement. I began to get more deeply involved in the adult education field, and was accepted to work as a graduate assistant in the Education Department at Lindenwood University.

By early 2014, I was back in Thailand working to finish up my Master's Degree, and I finally did it in July 2014. Meanwhile, I was contacted via email that the doctoral scholarship I had applied for at Lindenwood University was approved, and I was invited to return to start my program in August 2014. I was so excited with the coming opportunity, which marked a very significant movement in my academic career. Notwithstanding, I was also officially accepted to work as a doctoral assistant in the Education Department for the duration of my degree program there as well. This wonderful experience has involved a variety of people coming from different parts of the world, and it is clear to see why the United States is named, "United." Even if you are a very well-prepared student, you will encounter some cultural shock whilst you settle in a new place. I was involved in many classes which I found very challenging – you need to be able to stand out in presenting your own opinion on the subject matter rather than just sitting and listening to the lecture. Discussion is embraced as the most significant part of the class, and professors are always accessible either via office hours, phone calls, or email. You will not be left alone, as your professors are all very supportive – they try to assist you by providing all the sources you need for either your dissertation development or your personal life. People are so caring and friendly, and one thing you never want to miss is to make more friends and enjoy life to the fullest as American people do – they study hard, work hard, and play hard at the same time. However, since I am the only Cambodian student at Lindenwood University, I sometimes feel lonesome when I can't speak Khmer with anyone. It sounds ridiculous, but you would feel it too, if you encountered my circumstance. Anyway, I have learned to communicate with people from various backgrounds, and I made friends with them quickly, as I am also a friendly person. For the weather adjustment, there is no doubt that winter has frozen me to frostbite, and it sometimes everything shuts down when a big snow storm hits.

Last but not least, I would like to express my profound gratitude to my parents, and professors in Cambodia, Thailand and the United States for putting all your tenacity in polishing my growth in terms of both academic life and personal life. These efforts have ensured that I could move forward rapidly with the continuous opportunities coming to my life. Without your assistance, I would not be standing where I am now. You all are the light in my life. All the knowledge and skills I have gained from the University of Cambodia, Royal University of Law and Economics, Chulalongkorn University and Lindenwood University lighten me up with different perspectives in life, and I am wiser now. I also would like to encourage all Cambodian students to dream big and dare to go for what you want; nothing is impossible if you believe in yourself. Failure is not the end of the world, but rather it is a stepping stone to achieve something big. I would suggest every student to start moving out of your comfort zone and cleaning up the comfortable mess that prevents you from achieving your goals. Life is nothing without learning, so keep yourself educated through both formal and informal learning.

*The University of Cambodia Now Offers **KHMER TRACK***
The academic program was introduced in 2013, and continues to grow in size and popularity.

*Our original degree programs taught through the medium of English have been renamed as the **INTERNATIONAL TRACK**. In an effort to provide quality education to as many students as possible, selected programs will now be taught in Khmer: the content and quality is the same, so the only difference in the **KHMER TRACK** is the language of instruction.*

STUDY VISIT TO AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

By: Mr. Chheang Sangvath

Mr. Chheang Sangvath, Acting Dean for Undergraduate Studies Division and Director of Internal Quality Assurance at the University of Cambodia, visited Sydney University, Ryde Secondary College, Macquarie University, New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education, and Communities Confucius Institute from February 17th to 22nd, 2015, in Sydney, Australia. The purpose of the visit was joint exploration, classification, and enrichment of learning institution-specific theories and practices to foster institutional growth as well as overall social, economic, cultural and educational development. Some key elements were discussed on the topic of school management, curriculum leadership and education reform in Australia, which is focusing on the concept of school based management and transformational leadership in education. The quality of teaching and student's learning outcomes are still the main variables for education reform in Australia in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of successful school management.

The study visit was a part of Mr. Sangvath's doctoral degree program in Educational Management (International Program), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, at Mahidol University in Thailand, which promotes student's learning of both theory and practice. It is very important for future educators in developing nations to study and understand the lessons learned and current practices of the education system in developed nations in order to develop education systems in their own countries that are innovative and sustainable.



BOOK DONATIONS TO THE ASEAN STUDY CENTER

By: Mr. Ban Bunheng

The ASEAN Study Center (ASC) would like to extend a special thank you to Ms. Myca Magnolia M. Fischer for donating books related to the Philippines to the new ASEAN Study Center Library. These books will help build the resource capacity of the ASC at UC.

The donated books related to the Philippines' domestic and international affairs will make a lasting impact on the UC community. It makes a huge difference to have these books at our center in order for students to learn from the many admirable Filipino leaders that have helped transform our dynamic ASEAN Community.

As we count down to the ASEAN Economic Community, the ASEAN Study Center (ASC) will do all we can to help raise awareness and understanding of our diverse community. We have several exciting programs in the works for 2015 including publications, round-table discussions, a lecture series, and workshops aimed at helping bind our diverse ASEAN community together. We are very grateful to have the cooperation and support of the Embassy of the Philippines to help make our programs successful.

If individuals or institutions would like to donate resources to help build ASC's capacity to promote ASEAN awareness, please take a few minutes to come visit our center. Mr. Ban Bunheng, our deputy director, is always available to set up a visit for you, or to answer any questions you may have. Please don't hesitate to call him at 012-795-558, or email him at bunheng-asc@uc.edu.kh.



By: Mr. Travis Mitchell

On February 13th, 2015, Mr. Travis Mitchell, Deputy Director of the Institute of Research and Advanced Studies (IRAS), attended lectures at PUC and RUPP given by Dr. Kirk Bowman, Professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) in Atlanta, USA. Dr. Bowman spoke about successes and failures of tourism in Latin America, and how Cambodia can learn from their mistakes and accomplishments, including avoiding an overreliance on Angkor Wat and enhancing the airport experience for tourists.

As a former student of Dr. Bowman, Mr. Mitchell was able to talk frankly and openly with him privately after the lectures in order to discuss possible collaboration between both institutions. Georgia Tech has started a new study abroad program in Southeast Asia, and may be interested in partnering with the University of Cambodia. He has put Mr. Mitchell in touch with the coordinator of that program, and they are working to organize a visit in the near future.



ATTENTION UC STUDENTS! WRITING THE FUTURE OF CAMBODIA 2015 COMPETITION

By: Brendens Lek

Siam Cement Group (SCG), one of the leading companies in Thailand, ranked as the World Industry Leader in Sustainability Indices for the 3rd consecutive year. With a history of more than 100 years in business, SCG wants to engage students from all types of schools, local institutes, organizations and universities to compete in 'Writing the Future of Cambodia 2015'. SCG, the world industry leader in construction material, would like to engage Khmer students in a writing competition to write 500 words in English about, "Youth Engagement for Sustainable Community Development." The winner will receive the certification of the 'Writing the Future of Cambodia 2015' competition, and a cash prize of up to 2,000,000 riel for the Gold winner. Final submission in hard copy is due on 15 May 2015. Participants must be between 18 and 24 years old at the time of registration. Please turn in your 500 word essay to Mr. Brendens Lek Director of SDC, UC Campus, 4th floor, room 417.

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ucf.edu.kh



ALUMNI TALK

Mr. Chheang Vantak
Study Abroad Counselor
IDP Education Pty Ltd.
Bachelor's Degree in Law
College of Law
Graduating Class of 2014



What did you like about UC?

“What I like about UC is the course design which is a credit program which allows students to choose some subjects that they would like to study instead of only studying assigned courses which don’t match the students’ interests. I also liked that all the programs are taught in English.”

What did you think of your program’s facilities such as available technology, resources, and classrooms?

“I believe that UC has provided students with good facilities in terms of study materials and the supporting technology equipment that has been set up in the classrooms and libraries which are quite convenient for the students to focus on their studies.”

What accomplishments did you achieve during your university experience?

“To be frank, I actually had a number of achievements when I was studying at UC. I acknowledged that I am very confident in public speaking and very good at communicating professionally after having been trained by experienced professors at UC. I have gained a very valuable education and I did progressively well during my academic career.

Was there a professor, staff member, or fellow student who made a lasting impression on you or helped you when you were at UC? How? Why?

“I should keep this confidential by not naming out the professor’s name. The impression that I have toward the professor is about professor’s commitment and efforts to explain in detail to the students; I have never seen anyone do like this before. I believe that professor will contribute good knowledge to all the students at UC.”

Do you still keep in contact with any of your classmates, professors, or staff members?

“Friends are a part of my happiness and without them I would not have this happiness that I feel right now. We always get together when we are free from work, and some are continuing their studies abroad, which is very good. I still keep in touch with professors at UC as well because sometimes when I need letters of recommendation from them, they are very happy to issue me one.”

What was your most memorable moment as a student at UC?

“Speaking of academic life at UC, I will never forget about the structure of examinations because every student from all the faculties is designated to sit randomly in rows to avoid cheating. I believe this is a very good structure for UC.”

What would you like to tell prospective students about the university or the program?

“I really recommend UC as a preferred university because there are various fields of subjects to choose from. Additionally, there are many experienced professors who assist the students in all matters that they face.”

What advice can you offer to incoming or current students?

“As a UC alumnus, I can say that I had a great experience completing my academic study there. I would suggest to all students to study hard and find your strengths within your expertise – do not listen to stereotypes, but just be yourself and you will find that what you are doing is worth it.”

What career advice would you like to give to students to better prepare them for the real world?

“I would advise all UC students to be well-prepared for planning their future careers because as long as they like what they are doing they should focus on it until they reach their goals. Everyone starts from zero and so have I, but don’t forget that we do not end with zero. Students are encouraged to do internships because those experiences will help them to be successful in the workplace, or applying for scholarships.”

What is your current job? Is your current job related to your study program from the University of Cambodia?

“I am currently a Study Abroad Counselor at IDP Education pty Ltd and my current job is not 100 percent related; however, all the knowledge that I gained from UC is applied to my job.”

How has UC encouraged you to pursue your career?

“UC was designed to teach people something new, and how to deal with things that professionals typically face; therefore, I personally believe that UC has encouraged me to do something new for my future career.”

What are the career achievements that you would like to share with students?

“I have not done something in a big scale of achievement, but I have done something incredible for me and my family. I grow from one level to another which is good, as I can see it is a trend that always grows up and up.”

Describe UC in 3 words.

“Excellence, Experience and Effort”

What is your lasting impression of UC?

“I think UC is building leaders for tomorrow.”

Can current UC students/alumni contact you for career related advice? How should they contact you?

“Making friends and helping people are the two things that make me happy. If anyone has any questions or anything else that I can help with, then they can contact me via Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/chheang.vantak>.”

