

Joshua Jacobsen, who was awarded a College of Humanities and Social Sciences Study Award sent this report of his experiences on exchange during 2012.



Joshua, a Bachelor of Arts in Defence Studies and Politics student, completed a semester at California State University, East Bay, San Francisco in 2012.

Immersing yourself in the culture and politics of a new country is the best way to understand how other places in the world operate. That's according to Joshua Jacobsen, who is majoring in defence studies, and went on a student exchange to California State University (CSU) in 2012.

"The US is a major power in every aspect of world affairs. The chance to interact closely with students and professors in a university setting was something I felt would contribute to my overall education. Studying at CSU gave me the opportunity to achieve what I wanted from the exchange - an exposure to the life experiences and political views of the US."

Joshua took political science and security studies papers, and highly recommends his two favourites – *The United Nations and the World Community* and *War and Peace*.

The United Nations paper looked at the organisation and structure of the UN and its role in the world today. Participants were also part of a model UN conference, which involved about 400 students from other universities in California and Arizona. The other paper, *War and Peace*, looked at security threats and the response of the US to them.

The difference in the teaching method and the way the university operated initially caught Joshua off-guard.

"The quarter system means you have nine weeks of teaching, plus exams, in which to absorb a semester's worth of information. That pretty much counts out travelling during the quarter to explore other parts of the US - forget the trip to Vegas!"

“But San Francisco was a great place to live. It has a thriving cultural scene, wicked nightlife, good weekend attractions and a lot of outdoor activities. I spent a lot of time just exploring the area.”

Joshua also enjoyed the range of extra-curricular activities available, including travelling to New Orleans for Mardi Gras and visiting the Grand Canyon. The highlight of his exchange, however, was creating long lasting friendships with students from all over the world.

His advice to anyone participating in an exchange to a tertiary institution in the US would be to fully research how each university’s system works.

“Each campus has its own culture. Some cater for students coming straight from high school, others are for those who are balancing work and study. Make sure you know what you are heading for.”

Joshua said the support he received from both Massey and CSU was great.

“If you are hesitant about moving to a foreign country because you think there won’t be any support there for you, then think again. It’s provided if you need it, and the doors are always open if you have a question or a problem. If on the other hand everything is fine, then you can just focus on your study.”

