

Indigo Melrose, who was awarded a College of Humanities and Social Sciences Study Award sent this report of her experiences on exchange during 2012.



Dear supporters of a dream

Boxing Day; the pohutukawa are in blossom, the sun is shining, a tui lands close by whilst a heavy wood pigeon tries to take off and family are spending time chilling out Kiwi style. It's New Zealand at its best.

As lovely as the day is this letter is not to point out the merits of our country but to say a long overdue thank you to the people that were instrumental in my exchange to Berkeley, California. It truly was the most incredible year and has enabled me to grow on so many dimensions.

Berkeley; is a university buzzing with life, its name and history attract inspiring speakers from all over the world. Leaders in their field they give fresh insights into disciplines, making students question and think beyond the text book. It is an education that stirs curiosity. The campus itself is very charming; the Doe library is a interesting blend of modern and renaissance architecture. Students are active in not just the politics of campus but also in the larger political arena. Election time was unforgettable! Their drive to make a difference is surely what is needed in this upcoming generation of leaders.

As a student; at Berkeley my days were packed they say that there are three components to a student's day; study, party and sleep, but that students can only do two of the three. As you can imagine most students chose the two former over sleep and I was no exception!

Psychology and health science; I was often taught by professors whose work was actively molding the discipline of psychology and health. These professors, who I had heard of and read about, were the ones teaching me! I felt humbled and excited to be under the instruction of people who were responsible for so much useful and important research. At the same time I saw that they were ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

International House; my home for the last year and I cannot praise it enough. It made my time at Berkeley complete. The friends you make are from around the globe and I know I have made friends for life. I highly recommend living at International House! It teaches you to respect other cultures; Indians, Germans, French, Australians, Iranians and Japanese all living together learning that regardless of your heritage we are all incredible individuals who can learn so much from one another.

Travel; in the USA is a must, the diversity of experience was extraordinary. From the Grand Canyon which is so large, making you feel in awe of nature to the towering Red Woods of California, to the hot dry desert of Death Valley and the moonscape of Mono Lake and of course the once in a life time experience of Los Vagus which really is sin city all are very unique experiences. There is nothing better than a car packed full of new friends and an adventure ahead.

The USA; living in the USA is like living in the movies, the people are so friendly but also very intense, the culture is a interesting mix of opposites the extremely fat and ultra thin, the very rich and very poor, it teaches you to really look at humanity from a different perspective than the one used in New Zealand. The standard of living is variable; if you are wealthy then people can live like royalty however if you are poor it is survival on the streets. I have to say the amount of homeless in San Francisco shocked and saddened me.

The shire; as Americans like to call New Zealand, is where I am currently. Although I miss many things about the USA I also appreciate New Zealand with new eyes. Its natural beauty which I have made a solid vow to go and explore, its delicious coffee (America DOES NOT have good coffee!), the friendly laid back people that make the kiwi lifestyle so desirable and our country's collectivist attitude to supporting those in need. Oh I also LOVE drinking un-chlorinated, un-carbonated water again!

Anyway really this letter is just to show my appreciation to those who made so much learning possible, it truly has changed my life and I thank you from the bottom of my heart . Jenny Loveday you have been a power house in all those early difficult days of applications, Trish Barker your dedication with papers needed and acceptable papers to take has been much needed, Mimyi and Rachel who were stellar in

helping me sort out the health science papers needed and the conversion to Massey credits, Deb and Dai who have been a rock of support throughout the whole process, Alicia and Ian my parents who know how wonderful they have been in my life. Lastly, but most importantly, thank you to Dr Ute Walker and all those other College representatives of the Humanities and Social Sciences Study Award for 2012, for without this financial support this trip would not have been possible.

So many wonderful people thank you, it would not have happened without you. I highly recommend this exchange to every undergrad!

I look forward to 2013, it is sure to be another incredible year. May I also take this opportunity to wish you and your families health and happiness for the New Year.

Best wishes

Indigo Melrose



"A journey of a thousand miles begins with but a single footstep"