

Where the bloody hell WERE you?

"Where the bloody hell WERE you" is a series of CSU Global stories from students who took part in overseas study (and other fun travel things too!) as part of their CSU degree!



Jackson Board

Exploring the chaotic streets of Bangkok, haggling at an ancient Chinese markets in Shanghai, hiking through the Appalachians in Tennessee and hitting the slopes in Canada: all while gaining a US transcript to boost my career prospects. What more could you ask for?

In conjunction with CSU Global, I spent seven months overseas during the spring semester last year and studied at Western Illinois University, which was about three hours from Chicago, one of America's most vibrant and progressive cities.

The American university system is unlike anything here in Australia. Your perceptions of it would most likely come from the spate of teen college films that seem to be mass-produced each year. In a lot of ways this isn't too far from the mark. Beer pong, red and blue cup parties, mind blowing sporting facilities on campus and the puzzled looks if anyone mentions house music: all of this is true.

But just as true is the fact that the US remains a very conservative country. Although the election of Barack Obama will have an impact on a lot of important areas, don't expect social change to happen overnight. The differences between Australians and Americans are deeper than accents, geography and world knowledge. Adjusting to some of society's rules and expectations can certainly take time.

Exchange will throw up surprises. One big one was the difficulty of academics, which proved to remarkably easy given an emphasis on passing students. But, importantly, my time spent in the classroom was interesting and relevant to my journalism degree here at CSU, yet also presented ideas and notions that can only come from studying with professionals in another country. Being an overseas student encouraged certain social situations that may be unimaginable here at home.

With social circles that could just as easily include someone from Southern India as someone who's never left the state of Illinois, the possibility is there to truly extend skills in communication that are invaluable once the uni daydream ends. The opportunity to travel is one that should not be neglected. Once you hit that plane, the realisation really does strike that the world is a small place. It might be an awful cliché, but the world is your oyster and no experience is out of your reach if you're passionate and open minded about it.

The launch of CSU Global this year is particularly suitable given the need for international communication and flexibility in a shrinking job market. Job opportunities are no longer confined by geographic location. Don't think that a CSU degree can't lead to jobs throughout the world, but why not help yourself out?

Exchange will extend your university experience. It doesn't take strenuous planning or superhuman planning; just a willingness to take a chance. With the financial assistance provided by the university and the government, the opportunity is there to be leaving the fury of a Bathurst winter and be getting on a plane to study in the US, Sweden or even Japan.

I did it, and now I am an expert in American beers and have enough stamps in my passport for a lifetime. I cannot recommend an exchange semester highly enough and can only hope the experience will be an even easier and more exciting prospect for those to follow.

To have a chat with Jackson, please forward your details - full name, email and mobile to:

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NB: CSU Global Promotional Assistant will run information sessions on your campus throughout Session 2. Check when they are on via the CSU Global website www.csu.edu.au/csuglobal.



Facts in brief

The University Of Western Illinois is situated in the historic city of Macomb and was opened in 1902. It's Macomb campus accomodates over 11000 students, 5300 of whom live on campus. The university has four academic colleges and for three consecutive years has been ranked as one of the "Best in the Midwest Colleges" in the state by the Princeton Review.

Location

Macomb was settled in 1829 and went by the name of Washington until 1830 when it was renamed after General Alexander

Macomb, a general in the War of 1812. Macomb has a population of approximately 20000 and located on the La Moine River in McDonough County, Western Illinois.

Climate

Macomb's weather is very similar to that of CSU's campuses. Winters can get very cold with temperatures dropping into the minuses and summers can be hot and humid. The average annual rainfall for that area is 88cm. Average low and high temperature ranges (in degree Celsius) are:

January -4 to 4

April 4 - 17

July 18 - 31

October 6 - 19

Culture

Macomb, Illinois is a vibrant historical city dating back to the 1800's. This is reflected in the city's architecture and museums. Visitors interested in the history of Macomb can tour the area's museums and historic barns or even take in a ghost tour of the city. The annual Gazebo Arts festival shows off the artwork of talented locals and is held in conjunction with the Al Sears Jazz festival. Other activities of interest are the Balloon Rally and the Macomb Heritage Day.

Western Illinois University students who have an interest in the arts are well catered for. They can visit the university's own art gallery, attend a performance at one of several recital halls and theatres or just relax and enjoy the university's radio and television station. If you're after a 'hands on' experience you could join the campus performing arts society and follow a diverse range of pursuits supported by the College of Fine Arts and Communication.

Sport

Sporting centres and recreational activities are plentiful in Macomb and its surrounds. The city provides both indoor and outdoor facilities for a range of interests including golf, baseball, volleyball, basketball, hiking, fishing and ice-skating.

The University is has a strong sporting focus and competitors in baseball, football, soccer, basketball, volleyball, tennis and more. There are numerous clubs and organisations to join that support these sports.



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