

***You want a fantastic experience  
to change yourself dramatically?  
- No place better than UIS***

In UIS, there is a bewildering array of things and opportunities that will change you. You will encounter different cultural shock which you have never imagined in your countries, and in just a few years, you will come to find yourselves meeting the universal standard requiring more creative thinking, and diverse skills.

***Classes: Heavy burden, high Integrity, but creativity***

The first is always stressful. One's heart is beating hard, but also the head is anticipating something new and curious. I felt the same on my way to the classroom of UHB 2035 on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The impression of the first professor who I met in US reminded me of one of the famous action stars, Al Pacino in Hollywood; his style was also tough like the actor. He asked students to read various materials including text books, and then to write four page journals with single spaces for each theme – two or three themes every week. After only two weeks, I dropped that course. But all is not lost; it was a valuable experience to taste the American style classes.

At your first class, you will seem to be overwhelmed by an array of rules and rubrics to follow: how to make reports with specific font and spaces, how to submit your assignment on due date, and how you should do in the class in order to get a grade. Among those rules, the more impressive ones are accommodation for the disabled and academic integrity. Professors have an obligation to offer convenience to the disabled for studying. One of my classmates has serious physical handicap relying on wheel-chair. He was a famous football player in high school days but lost his most muscle nerve in the accident during training. He speaks slowly and unclearly

and he can not write notes - in the first week, the professor sent an e-mail to students to seek someone to read class notes to him after class. However, he is full time student and he is also doing internship program in a government office with other students. He participates in all classes like other students; he engages in classes more than others, asking more questions, and sometimes making presentations.

Academic integrity is another one to see how American society is operating, and what American put emphasis on. In short, Academic integrity means if you draw other opinions to your writing, you should notify they are not yours but others by using quotation mark and citation. There is an increasing convenience which students access the original materials of all kinds through Internet to the extent that professors can provide every kind of journals to students through “blackboard” – it is a kind of electronic board that every student enrolled can attach whatever they want, and the media for communication between them. If you attach your file to BlackBoard for submission, the program of integrity would find out how much of your journal matches others’; it will show the percentile of plagiarism.

There is another kind of integrity in UIS. In one of my classes, one mate was making presentation on the problems of government agency’s alcohol and drug treatment services. He brought a container of alcohol for real reaction. It, however, raised a huge wavelength. The professor scolded him that it was profoundly inappropriate to bring a container of alcohol, even an empty one, into the halls of academia. Although the mate’s intent was innocent, he had to apologize to all of them.

The classes in UIS basically proceed by discussion and interactions. Professors are always encouraging you to say your comments and opinions on subjects with your own words. If classes in UIS have something in common, it is to train students to speak their opinions

confidently, idiosyncratically, coherently, and even creatively, which is believed to be the essence of academic community and social leadership. In my class PAD 502, “Organization’s Dynamics”, I need to do at least two presentations in this semester. Presentation are not just to speak your thoughts, rather you need to lead the whole class with your mates, continuously interacting with each other; throwing adequate questions to stimulate mates’ brains, and motivating their engagement. A few days ago, I played role playing and made a short skit and recorded it for presentation with my classmates.

Being free to say one’s opinion with observance of rules, tolerance to different opinions, and organizing one’s thoughts well are, I think, the bases of the efficient leadership, and, furthermore, the democracy of society. If you are in UIS, immerse yourselves in the discussion with open mind and confidence, and try to not to miss the chance to horn your speaking skill in your classes, and then you can dream to become a efficient leader such as Mr. Obama, or Mrs. Clinton.

*Extra activities? – Experience you’ve never imagined*

“GO”; Do you know the mental sport, “GO”, of Asia? More accurately, it has been mainly a popular sport just in Korea, Japan, and China, even if some foreigners are interested in its high level strategies, and its lessons to life. This game is played by two persons who are trying to make more boundaries with black and white stones respectively. I have played the game for nearly thirty years. How could I be not surprised at witnessing the sight that some Americans were playing the game on the checkered yard beside the fountain of UIS! They were using the checkered yard as the board, and substituting plastic plates for stones. What made them fascinated to? Jonathan GoldbergBelle, the chairperson of “Go” club, and the director of

International Program Office, introduced this club, “I became interested in GO through travel to Japan. I have been trying to establish a GO Club on the UIS campus for about four years. Student interest has been low but for the past two years I’ve been playing publicly in the cafeteria and now outside, near the fountain, and interest has been growing. We’ve been able to attract new students each time we play outside.” Every Wednesday at 5pm, you can find the interesting board near the fountain in UIS, and taste the eccentric. Me? I have already been one of the members. Let’s go with “Go”!

“*Star Parties*”: What do you think is the brightest star in the night in September? The Great Bear, or the Venus? If you wonder, you can find it is the planet Jupiter in the UIS observatory at night, located at the top of Brookens Library on the UIS campus. On the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> of September with my family, I visited “The Star Parties”, held about two times a month by the department of astronomy. In the stairs on the way to the laboratory, experts explained the solar system and showed the real pictures which we had little chance to see on the planet and galaxies. I was stunned at the picture of the Mars which looked like a scene of the earth such as rock mountains or sands. The featured object for viewing was half full moon with a celestial telescope – it is a little smaller size, but surprisingly the same shape with what you have seen in movies! At night, while studying in the library of UIS, sometimes put your eyes up and imagine watching the Moon by the telescope – it had been a long dream of human beings. What is your dream? It will come true like that in UIS.

“*Speaker Series*”: “Land of Lincoln: Environmental History & the 16<sup>th</sup> President”, “Can the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Be Solved?”, “Shakespeare Behind Bars: Film & Discussion with Shakespeare Director.” Every week, you can hold the chance to meet interesting issues related to

your majors, with figures such as former ambassador, named journalists, popular directors, authors of famous novels. On October 1<sup>st</sup>, I dropped by Brookens Auditorium to attend “Speakers Series. That day, a journalist introduced an Illinoisan legislator, Paul Simon, and commented his contribution to the Illinois politics. The auditorium was full beyond my expectation with nearly one hundred people. Why did they attend?

Paul Simon was mainly a legislator in Illinois in the late 19 centuries, and was famous for “going his own way” for clean government. His motto was the responsibility of public servants. He especially opposed to the unnecessary and political increase tax bills with his concrete belief, even against his own party, the Democrat. That is why I attended there, and want to listen how other Americans thought about their governments and politics. I, whose major is public administration, know well how most Illinoisan people are disgusted by the state government especially due to the continuous scandal of their state governors, and there have been an rather apolitical or cynical atmosphere around the UIS campus. After the series, I asked a woman who sat behind me, why she attended here and how well did she know him? She said she is a volunteer with no job and attend any speeches she is interested in, no matter how busy her voluntary activity. And she added Paul Simon is a real politician, she respects him and likes his big ears and thick glasses.

Opinionated and persuasive speeches, engaged attendants, great leaders, and a fanatic volunteer. This is the America. And it is UIS, through various kinds of seminars and meaningful meetings with figures, where you can feel what the American think about, what they put value on, and what they hope for.

### *Accommodation to UIS and US*

If you are international students whose first language is not English, you might be

worried about your adaptation to the life in universities as well as in US. I was so. But you do not need to.

***Help for Studying:*** As for studying skills, if you have some time, I want to recommend you to enroll in ISPEL, the ESL course in UIS. As for me, for two months, I had a chance to hone basic skills needed to study in university such as presentation and discussion skills, the way of writing reports and doing research, and even citations. Field trips every week will give you memorable stories with international students. If you feel heavy burden of your class, do not hesitate to talk with your faculty or professors, who will give you accommodation as possible as they can. The CTL (Center for Technical Learning) I visit every week, will contribute to improvement of your writing skills.

***Adjusting to living:*** When it comes to adapting to living, the teachers of ISPEL or the international office will guide you where to go shopping, how to open my account, and even what to do for getting driving license. They will be mentors during your university life. In addition, there is International Student Association meeting (ISA). Hyejeong Chang, the chairperson of ISA, says “One of the most important reasons I attend this meeting every Friday is because almost every time I go to the meeting, I see new faces, which makes me excited.” She added, “Trip to Six Flags in St. Louis, and water war was the fantastic or memorable events. And for October, we are participating in International Festival and Halloween Food Bank Project.” There are really a lot of mentors to help your studies and accommodation in living.

***By Byung Jun Joo, who is in the master course of Public administration. He is here from South Korea with his family***