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TWO STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF CAMBODIA

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When I first arrived on campus after a relaxing four-hour bus ride from New York City, I was struck by the sheer natural beauty of Cornell. With its inspiring architecture, forest-green woods, scenic quads, and dramatic waterfalls and lake, Cornell possesses a quintessentially picturesque university campus.

More than one thousand high school students come to Cornell every summer, from all four corners of the globe, excited to take on the academic challenges of studying at Cornell. The community at Summer College was incredibly diverse: I had classmates from London, Dubai, San Francisco, Tokyo, and New York. As an international student far from home, I felt very welcomed and comfortable in the Cornell community.

Summer College offers programs in a wide range of subjects, from architecture, art, design, and fashion to engineering and robotics, public policy, social change and sustainability, and veterinary medicine. I chose Hotel Operations Management, which is an introduction to the business of hospitality. I knew I wanted to pursue hospitality management in college, so this course (at the world’s number-one hotel school) was exactly what I needed to gain exposure to the industry.
My professors, Reneta and Mark McCarthy, put all of us at ease within the first hour of class. I appreciated their upbeat teaching style and ability to make university-level course work accessible to high school students. At the same time, they treated us like college students and engaged us in challenging course content. Their patience in guiding us to understand business communication and hotel operations concepts allowed me to fully retain the information I learned. Their teaching style made the content very easy to understand and remember, and the teaching assistants were readily available to us and made us feel comfortable with their easygoing style.

I expected to be challenged intellectually (that’s why I was there, ready to learn), but it did take some adjusting to the long class hours, business reports, and group presentations. Because the program was only three short weeks, classes ran from morning till 6:00 p.m. and often later. The work didn’t stop there, since we still had business reports and group presentations to prepare. My friends and I often worked together until midnight. It was mentally exhausting at times but stimulating, and a great way to prepare for university.

Despite the work load, I found plenty of opportunity to explore Cornell’s campus and the quaint city of Ithaca. Cornell’s grounds are expansive, with many hidden gems. On occasion after class, I would leave the Hotel School and hike around Beebe Lake before heading back to my dorm.

One of the many great places to meet friends was the Cornell Dairy Bar, which sells Cornell’s signature ice cream made at Cornell’s very own dairy processing plant on campus. The rich and creamy ice cream is only sold on campus, so make a point of stopping by the Dairy Bar if you ever visit Cornell. I wish I could have figured out how to bring some back with me to Taipei.

My friends and I took advantage of occasional down time to go on walks around campus as well as to go off campus to explore the nearby Ithaca Farmers Market and restaurants on the Ithaca Commons and in Collegetown. During weekends and after class, my friends and I enjoyed exploring the gorges and the beautiful natural areas that surround the campus.

Although my three weeks at Cornell University were challenging, the program left me enlightened, excited to learn more about the hotel industry, and enthusiastic about studying hospitality at Cornell. Summer College was life-changing. It not only exposed me to the business aspect of hospitality, but it also helped me mature. The three weeks of independence helped me to become more self-reliant and sociable. Being in a completely new environment really motivates you to get to know people and make friends. My experience at Cornell confirmed my interest in hotels and left me eager to apply to Cornell’s School of Hotel Administration.

If you are intellectually inquisitive, seeking college credits, interested in experiencing life in the US and at one of the world’s best universities, or just simply unsure of how to spend your next summer, look no further! Cornell University’s Summer College is exactly where you can broaden your horizons.

If you would like to find out more about the various courses on offer at Cornell Summer College visit www.sce.cornell.edu

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