

RETURNED EXCAHNGE STUDENTS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AT THE PRESENTATION ORGANIZED BY OFFICE OF IE&IE

The Office of International Exchanges and International Education (IE&IE) held two presentations last week explaining the nuts and bolts of studying abroad. Both of these occasions attracted more than 200 students. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, Feng Chao-kang, one of the speakers, encouraged the participants to “take the challenge” rather than missing the opportunity because of fear of the unknown. The organizer also arranged students who had just returned from their overseas exchange programs to share their experiences with the participants.

Both presentations divided participants in small groups to facilitate more personal discussions between those students who have returned and those who wish to go in the near future. The discussions were fruitful and productive as the returned students happily presented the pictures they had taken while studying abroad. Each picture vividly captured their life abroad.

In addition to Vice President Feng Chao-kang, and Lily Hwei-mei Chen, the Director of the Office, Dr. Patricia Tolmie from the Education Department, Winona University, one of Tamkang’s sister universities in the USA, also attended the presentations. The latter invited three exchange students to come along with her to share their thoughts and experiences after having spent one month at her university. In particular, Director Lily Hwei-mei Chen provided valuable and needful advice to the students: to have “the determination to face the challenge” and “a good psychological preparation” .

One of the major obstacles for studying abroad for most students who participated in the presentations was the issue of finance, as most overseas universities require high tuition fees. However, the experience of Yang Shen-zong who spent one year studying at Chou Gakuin University, Japan was exceptional. She pointed out that she had received eighty thousand Japanese Yuan per month as scholarship so she could concentrate on her study without worrying about money or finding a part-time job. She summed up her experience at Chou Gakuin Univ. as living in a five-star hotel with a view of Fuji Mountain with very little money!

Her case is unusual by comparison with those students who have just returned from Universite de Jean Moulin, Lyon 3, France. There were 10 of them, who spoke about their impressions and experiences of Europe. Four of them gave detailed analyses of the differences between Taiwan and France in terms of university education and college language programs. During their stay in France, they were able to immerse themselves among the locals, and traveled all over Europe by train to experience other cultures outside France. However, they warned that they were not as “looked after” by the French university as by universities in other countries. They advised those who were at the presentations not to “expect what the university can do for you, but to rely on your own initiative to solve problems” .

Another returned student, Lee Yi-shan, a senior Mass Communication major, who was the first exchange student studying in Warsaw University, Poland, shared her distinctive experiences in Warsaw. As the Chinese population in Warsaw was only a handful, she seized this golden opportunity to practice her Polish. Since she was not able to utter one word of Polish when she arrived and since she was the first Taiwanese exchange student there, she described her one year in Warsaw as a wonderful adventure in which she had formed some unexpected precious friendships.

All these first-hand accounts received warm applause. Huang Chian-yi, a freshman in Electronic Engineering is convinced of the benefit of such presentations, even though he is not yet eligible for application. He said that attending them now rather than later had given him ample time for preparation. Chou Chien-hsin, a Computer Science and Engineering senior student, added that although he did not meet the required criteria for exchange now, he believed that he “would have another opportunity” someday in his graduate days.

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