

Short-stay Program Studying Abroad FY 2008

FINAL REPORT

Experiences @ University of Canterbury, New Zealand

Report on completion of the short-stay study abroad program in FY 2008

School: Multidisciplinary Sciences

Department: Informatics

Name of the student: Farzana Yasmeen

Destination country: New Zealand

Receiving university/institute: Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering,
University of Canterbury, New Zealand.

Period of study: 7th September – 14th November, 2008

Date of report: 15/12/2008

A general description of the receiving university/institute:

The University of Canterbury (UC) is a lushly green campus of 87 hectares of land, situated in the garden city, Christchurch, in the Ilam suburb. When established in 1873, Canterbury College, as the University was originally known, was only the second university in New Zealand. Today, it comprises a central complex of libraries, lecture theatres, laboratories and staff accommodation surrounded by playing fields, woodlands and the renowned Ilam Gardens.

The first day at the university was a very pleasant experience for me. I found that most of the students used bicycles to commute to and from campus. The staff at my receiving institute were very friendly and helpful. The Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering (CSSE) is situated in the Erskine building adjacent to the Maths department. It is on the crossing of Science and Engineering road, which is very convenient to remember. I was given a desk with two very modern computers in the 'Network and Simulations Research Lab' on the 3rd floor.

Preparation before leaving Japan

I learned about the Short-stay Study Abroad program from the SOKENDAI website, around the end of November 2007. I was keen to work with PlanetLab, and though the Department of Informatics has a connection to private PlanetLab, using the public PlanetLab was more worthwhile in many ways. I felt that this grant was an excellent opportunity that would allow me to go to some other institution that would provide me facilities not available in my home institution. I came to know of the PlanetLab facility at UC from a senior I previously knew, who was at that time a PhD student in New Zealand. He helped me contact Dr. Krzysztof Pawlikowski at the department of CSSE in UC. Dr. Krys was very anxious to have a student willing to work with PlanetLab and thus accepted to take me as a short-term student in his lab.

I completed all the necessary application procedures required by SOKENDAI by the end of February 2008. Calculating the financial expenses took most time and thought during the application process, but it was relatively easy for me as I found a fixed rate accommodation, which would be near the university also. I also gave a booking for tickets before hand on the dates I expected to depart for the short-stay program.

After the results of the grant came through (positive), I tried to study and prepare myself about PlanetLab, and also tried to acquaint myself with the customs in New Zealand from different sources, such as the Internet and travel magazines. Also I tried to gather as much information as possible about the UC and the people I would be working with there. This helped a lot in the first few days. Another thing that helped was that New Zealand is an English-speaking country.

Even though the native Maoris speak a different language, I felt that the English language would be sufficient enough to get along. Also, as soon as I got the grant I also went to make arrangements for my visa at the New Zealand Embassy in Shibuya, which I got within a week.

Study and/or research during the stay

After my first week at CSSE, I found that I would be the first student to use the 2 Planetlab nodes at the university. In this regard, as a new concept, I got a lot of help from the teachers and other students, who were also eager to learn to work with PlanetLab. As a result of my experiences, I wrote a manual that will be helpful to new users of the PlanetLab, Canterbury site. This manual is to be uploaded onto their website.

(Attachment: [Manual.pdf](#))

Near the end of my study, I gave a seminar on my experiences to an audience of about 15 people, on 7th November 2008. This seminar was advertised on the UC diary, and as such students from other disciplines were also present there. I also gave a short presentation about my work in Japan.

(Attachment: [Japan.pdf](#))

(Attachment: [PLANETLAB.pdf](#))

I have also recently submitted the work I have done during my stay in the form of a paper, "Distributing Akaroa2 on PlanetLab" in the forthcoming IEICE General Conference to be held in Matsuyama city, Japan from March 17-20, 2009.

(Attachment: [Paper.pdf](#))

Activities other than study or research during the stay

New Zealand is famous for its scenic views and wide range of tourist attractions. I was very lucky to get to visit some beautiful places such as Kaikoura Beach, Akaroa Peninsula, Lyttleton Port, Diamond Harbor, New Brighton and Sumner.

The city center itself also has a lot of places to visit, such as The Arts Center, Hagley Park, Botanic gardens, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch Cathedral etc.

In fact, there was so much to see and do with weekends that I hardly had any time to feel homesick. The people in Christchurch are also very friendly. So, it was very easy to get along.

The owners of the guesthouse I stayed in (the Thistle Guesthouse) were particularly helpful to help me find the proper bus routes and student discounts (!).

Language at the receiving university/institute

English was required for both research and living. Score 283 (cbt) of TOEFL was enough.

Things you found difficult (if any)

None

Advice for future applicants

Try to know the schedule of your receiving professor before hand. It will perhaps be a better idea to visit at a time he will not be away on any trip for long durations.