



## Mihika Ashutosh Joshi

*Mihika (first from left) travelling with her friends in Washington DC.*

### What were classes at University of Virginia (UVA) like?

I took 3 economics modules and 2 business modules - International Finance, Money & Banking, Economics Analysis of Law, Corporate Finance and Intermediate Investments. The mode of instruction and assessment at UVA is very similar to NUS - with midterms and group projects forming part of the continual assessment mix. Class content is comparable to that at NUS, but there is no bell curve at UVA. Students are more vocal in class.

The culture in UVA is more laid back. For example, group project meetings were always earlier in the day, and students usually spent their weekends relaxing by taking road trips or visiting home to unwind. In Singapore, there is a culture of scheduling group meetings late in the day in order to get the work done as quickly as possible.

### What is the biggest takeaway from your exchange experience?

I think my biggest takeaway was the friends that I made from all over the world. I got to meet people from France, Germany, Belgium, UK and Hong Kong. We formed a very multi-nationality group, which was not something I would have experienced in Singapore. It was a great opportunity to speak to people from different cultures, learning about how their cultures are so different from that in Singapore.

### What was your favourite place that you travelled to on exchange?

I travelled to Boston, Washington DC, New York, San Francisco and a few cities and hiking spots within Virginia. I really liked the hikes around UVA. These 45-minute hikes were very tiring but at the end of each trail was an extremely beautiful view of the mountains from which we could enjoy the sunset.

### How did you integrate into the local culture & adapt to the differences?

Living on campus allowed me to meet many friendly locals who were very willing to show the exchange students around. In the first few weeks, when my fellow exchangers and I would spend time in the common spaces, many local students came up to us and made us feel welcome.

A particular group of freshmen would spend hours playing poker with us at night. I also had the good fortune of sharing a room with a local, and that certainly helped with the integration. In class, I also interacted with group mates from class. For example, my money and banking group mates and I enjoyed many meals together. Finally, there are also many CCAs on campus where we can meet different groups of people that share a common interest. In particular, I joined the fitness training interest group, for weekly strength training and spin classes.

### What advice would you give to students who are going on exchange?

The first advice that I would give is to just go there and have fun. Don't stress too much about friendships and all that; that will happen with time. Make your own experience however you want it to be. You can reach out to the global relations office, the peer advising leaders (PALs) or even your FASS SEP coordinator when needed. Also, don't worry too much about studies like you do in Singapore, and travel a lot!

The second advice is to be mindful of module mappings and study plans before you go on exchange. Ensure that you are able to complete your study plan because you might not be guaranteed modules that you want and you might fall behind which may cause unnecessary stress when you come back. It is best to complete unrestricted electives while on exchange because then you don't have to worry about not completing your study plan. Else, look through the partner university's course catalogue, read the descriptions and pick modules that are at least 50% similar to those in NUS. Then hope for the best!