Being the first Swinburne student to be accepted to go on exchange to the University of Cincinnati (UC), was very honouring, but at the same time very daunting. It was like being the first at anything – you don’t know what to expect and you have to ‘learn by doing’. Before leaving home, everyone was telling about how cold it was going to be and how I wouldn’t be ready for it. But to everyone’s surprise, it has been some of the best weather Cincinnati has had through September to December.

When I arrived in Cincinnati, I got to my house (Conversa Manor – 14 international exchange student – all under one roof!) not knowing what I was in for, what kind of people my house mates would be and what happens if I hated them… Lucky for me, within the first few days, it was like the 14 of us had been best friends for years. We had 2 English girls, 2 French girls & 1 guy, 2 German girls & 2 guys, 2 Japanese girls, 1 Brazilian girl & 1 guy and me! Living with people from other countries was a great experience and one that I will never forget, I learnt a lot about other languages, as well as some words.

We were like a little family, and we were making friends everywhere around UC – even the shuttle bus driver knew us. As a family, we did lots together, movies, laser tag, weekend trips to Chicago, shopping trips, breakfasts, lunches and dinners. We will be friends for life – we have already planned trips each year to England, Brazil, Germany, France and Australia for the next 10 or so years.

The UC campus was even bigger than I was expecting. UC is very big on sport (football, basketball, volleyball, soccer) the campus is designed around Nippert Stadium and the campus recreation center. I went to all of the home football games, a few basketball games plus we went to see a Cincinnati Reds baseball game.

Everyone at UC was very welcoming and friendly, so it was always very easy to ask for directions and help from. While at UC, I also did lots of Swinburne promotion, during the International Expo Week, in class presentations, met up with people who were interested in coming to Swinburne.
UC International planned lots of welcome trips for us throughout the quarter. Such as shopping trips to Jungle Jim’s (an international supermarket), shopping malls, pool parties, movie nights, trivia, guest speakers and buddy programs. After meeting/talking to the lady who planned most of these events, one of my housemates and I decided we wanted to plan a trip for Halloween – to a haunted house. So we got online and found Dent Haunted School House (one of the best in USA) and planned the trip, it was good fun planning the trip and also a great experience.

Before leaving home, I was worried about arriving in America and getting really home sick, but surprisingly it’s not that different to home – just A LOT more junk food. The classes I took were very enjoyable, the professors were all very excited to have an Australian in their class, therefore they were always happy to help me. The students ALL fell in love with my accent, I’ve never said “Gday” or “crickey” so much in my life.

This is an experience that will stay with me forever, I’ve been lucky enough to get the opportunity to experience UC and make some great friends from all around the world.

I'm looking forward to catching up with them in the future, cause I know that we will be friends forever. The worst thing about this trip was leaving the Conversa house and knowing I won't be living with these amazing people again, it really clicked to me how much I am going to miss them all.

I would recommend studying at UC to anyone and everyone. It has changed my life and I learnt so much while being there for just 3 months.