

U.S. Summer Vacation Educational Experiences

By Fernanda Osthoff, Class of 2011

My Cambridge Summer Experience

Last semester, specifically in early March, I decided to apply to *The Cambridge Prep Experience* after meeting a representative of the Oxbridge Academic Programs at school who handed me a brochure of their summer programs. I chose *The Cambridge Prep Experience* instead of *The Oxford Prep Experience* because I was fascinated by the unique courses offered as well as the charming, medieval landscape of Cambridge. As my major, I selected a course called “Mathematics and Nature” which explored the parallels between mathematical thought and naturally occurring patterns. Cambridge seemed the best place to do so; after all, it was with a falling apple that Isaac Newton, Cambridge’s greatest scientific thinker, first detected the effect of gravity. I applied for Medical Science as my minor course — which I eventually changed to Astronomy. Even though I was not awarded the full Academic Achievement Scholarship which I had applied for, I was offered an Exceptional Merit Scholarship of US\$3,500 towards the program costs.

I embarked for England on July 5, 2008. As soon as I arrived at Heathrow Airport in London, I was taken to Cambridge in a shuttle arranged by the university professors. The program was located at Peterhouse, the oldest college in Cambridge, founded in 1284. Peterhouse is also the smallest college in central Cambridge, with around 300 students. One of the most amazing things about Peterhouse was its dining hall; dating to 1286, it is the oldest space among the 31 colleges that constitute the University of Cambridge, in continual use for over 700 years. Residing at Peterhouse and experiencing life at Cambridge for three-and-a-half weeks was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. Besides attending classes from Monday to Saturday (major classes met 3 hours per day from Monday through Saturday and minor classes met for 1 1/2 hours on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays), students had a lot of free time to explore the town. My friends and I loved to go punting on the River Cam, a very popular Oxbridge pursuit which consists of propelling long, flat boats on the river with poles called punts. During their free time, students also had the opportunity of bonding with people from diverse places around the world, including India, Japan, Singapore, Africa, and Brazil.

Besides offering students unique courses and free time, the program also provided incredible opportunities, such as one-day trips to Canterbury and London. We also had the chance to attend optional lectures, such as one with Professor James G. Basker, the Program Founder, Richard Gilder Professor of Literary History at Barnard College, Columbia University, and author of the collection of poetry on slavery entitled *Amazing Grace*. In addition, students were offered a lot of entertainment, such as watching outdoor Shakespearean performances at other college campuses, weekly Film Nights at the Peterhouse Theatre, and Saturday Dance Nights.

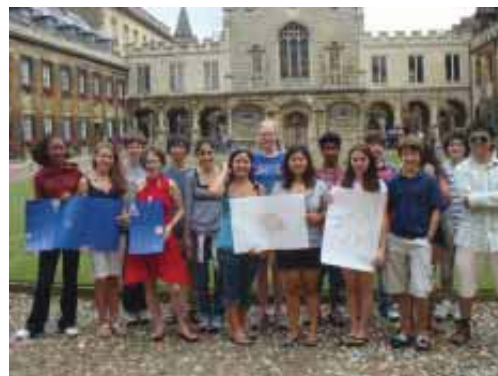
In conclusion, this summer was a very memorable one for several reasons. To start with, I was granted an Exceptional Merit Scholarship which enabled me to attend a remarkable summer program. Furthermore, it was my first time traveling on my own, and it was also my first time in England. Moreover, experiencing a Cambridge-student life for almost an entire month was unforgettable! Lastly, I was greatly inspired by my math teacher, Cambridge graduate student Lu Gram, and I was greatly honored to have received his “Mathematics and Nature” award.



Cambridge, England



Fernanda Osthoff at Peterhouse



Mathematics and Nature class at Peterhouse



Punting on the River Cam