



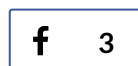
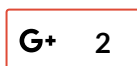
WHAT I LEARNT AFTER A SEMESTER AT UNITED WORLD COLLEGES

🕒 June 27, 2017 👤 Ellen (https://www.rakbo.com/author/rakbo_ellen/)

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The United World Colleges (<https://www.uwc.org>) (UWC) is a collectivized movement of international schools with the common mission of “making education a force to unite people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.” Looking back at the year I’ve spent in Germany (<https://www.rakbo.com/places-visit-germany-summer/>) as a student of

Robert Bosch College (<http://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/en/>), I can say with certainty that I’ve learned a thing or two more about myself, but also

learned more about the lively lifestyle of UWC

(<https://www.rakbo.com/study-abroad-united-world-colleges/>).

In honor of the incoming zero-years (admitted applicants who will start in the fall), here are some reflections and words of wisdom. To any zero-years who may have stumbled upon this – I know the frantic feeling and excitement you may be experiencing right now, but my main word of advice? Don't fret! Soon, you'll be sitting in a cafeteria longing for mom's homemade dishes, walking through new cities (<https://www.rakbo.com/traveling-without-a-plan/>), finding traces of nostalgia from your favorite bookshop back home with every step you take. Soon you'll miss much of what you left behind. Appreciate and savor the time you have left knowing that you'll soon be heading toward a big adventure (<https://www.rakbo.com/brave-new-world-of-studying-abroad/>), away from those coffee runs with your friends or those silly fights with your siblings. Those sweet memories will be what carry you forward during times of loneliness during UWC.

However, there will no doubt be a shortage of new experiences that you'll gain from UWC. Here are some of my main takeaways. Leaving home (<https://www.rakbo.com/ways-reduce-homesickness-abroad/>) and meeting people from all over the world (<https://www.rakbo.com/why-international-friends-rock/>) and from different walks of life has been incredibly humbling to me. From seeing someone's eyes almost fill with tears upon seeing stars light up the sky at night to experiencing someone else's giddiness when they see (and taste?) snow for the first time, to witnessing the journeys my classmates have made in order to get here. All those experiences remind me to appreciate life's simple pleasures. My experiences have also forced me to confront alternative realities and in the process, broaden my mind and views of the world around me.

To say that coming to UWC was a nerve-wracking and slightly frightening experience would be an understatement. I remember anxiously waiting at the airport as my co-years began to arrive; these were the people (<https://www.rakbo.com/making-international-friends-creates-a-better-future/>) I had contrived in my mind to be physics whizzes (which some turned out to be), Shakespearean poets, and inventors, which was quite intimidating to say the least.

But feeling intimidated slowly faded as we pondered over terminology in anthropology class or all struggled over a math problem together. These geniuses, it turned out to be, would soon become the same goons I later laughed with over silly jokes and contemplated many other life wonders with. While everything may seem daunting at first, keep in mind that everyone else is probably just as lost as you are. We all made mistakes (<https://www.rakbo.com/make-mistakes-important-fail/>), but rebounded and

laughed through it together. Perhaps it was in those moments that we learned the most, especially about each other.

Diversity is a word we throw around so commonly nowadays that sometimes, I feel it loses its meaning. If we are talking about the diversity of people waving different national flags, then UWC boasts a great deal of diversity. However, from my experiences at UWC, I've learned that diversity extends to much more than just national or ethnic diversity.

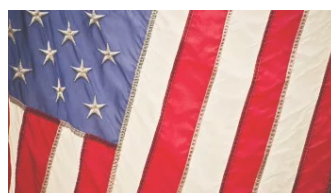
Diversity is... well, diverse. Sure, we have students from over 88 nationalities, but looking beyond that, we also realize that people are so much more than where their passport is issued from. We are diverse in our interests, our ways of self-expression and our ideas. This shouldn't be confined by our nationalities or ethnicities (<https://www.rakbo.com/three-stages-of-stereotyping/>). Even with the diverse array of colors our flags may offer, I truly think that our diversity lies in the many different characters that our school embodies.

I'd also add that being at a UWC has pushed me to listen more and not just because we have a multitude of different accents that are sometimes difficult to understand. Many of us come from places where we were used to being leaders and being very open in voicing our own opinions. Being abroad, though, you realize sometimes it's more important to listen to others than it is to always be the first to raise your hand.

In a place where everyone is so enthusiastic and opinionated, you learn the power of sitting back and opening your ears first. Which leads me to my final point: to not listen too much. It's always useful to listen to our peers and take in their opinions of the world around us, but it's also just as important to remember where you come from and stay true to yourself, too, no matter what. I'm grateful for the opportunities and new life experiences that UWC has given me in return.

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Ellen is a New Yorker who's love of travel started when studying at United World Colleges (UWC)'s Robert Bosch College.

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