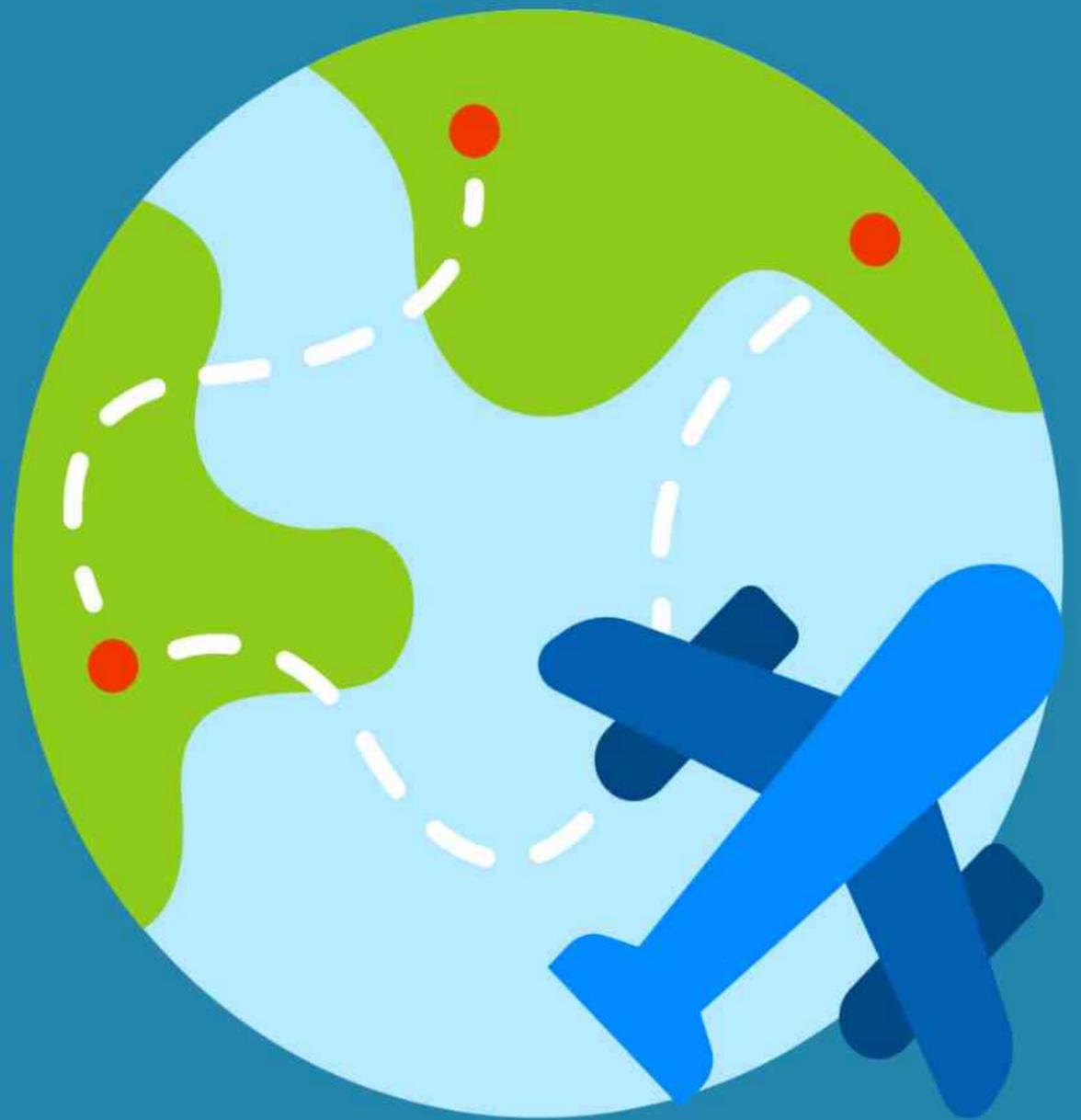




STUDY ABROAD REFLECTION

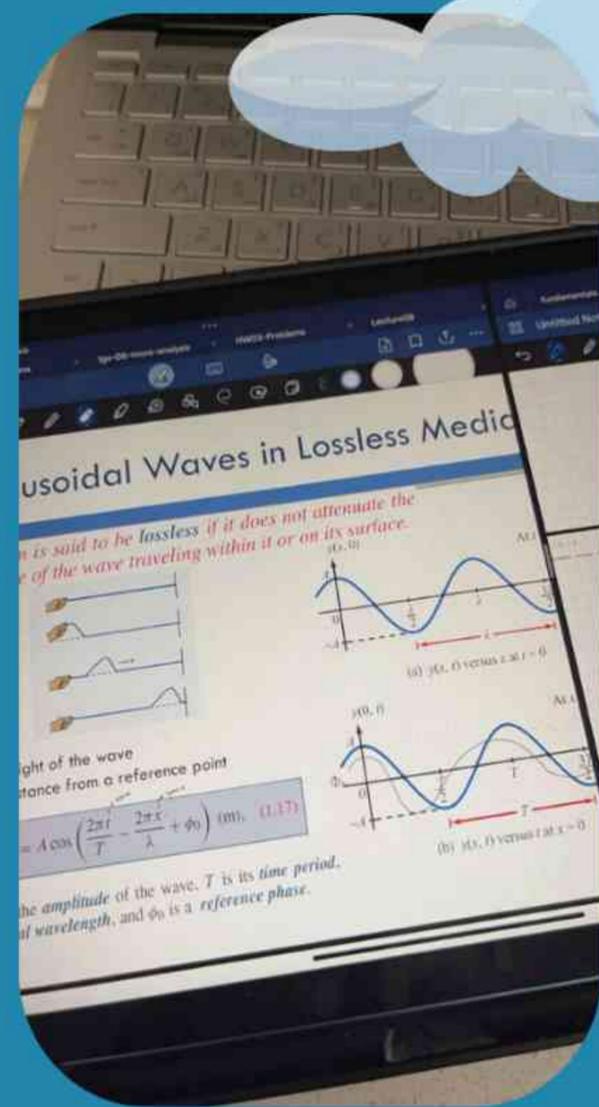
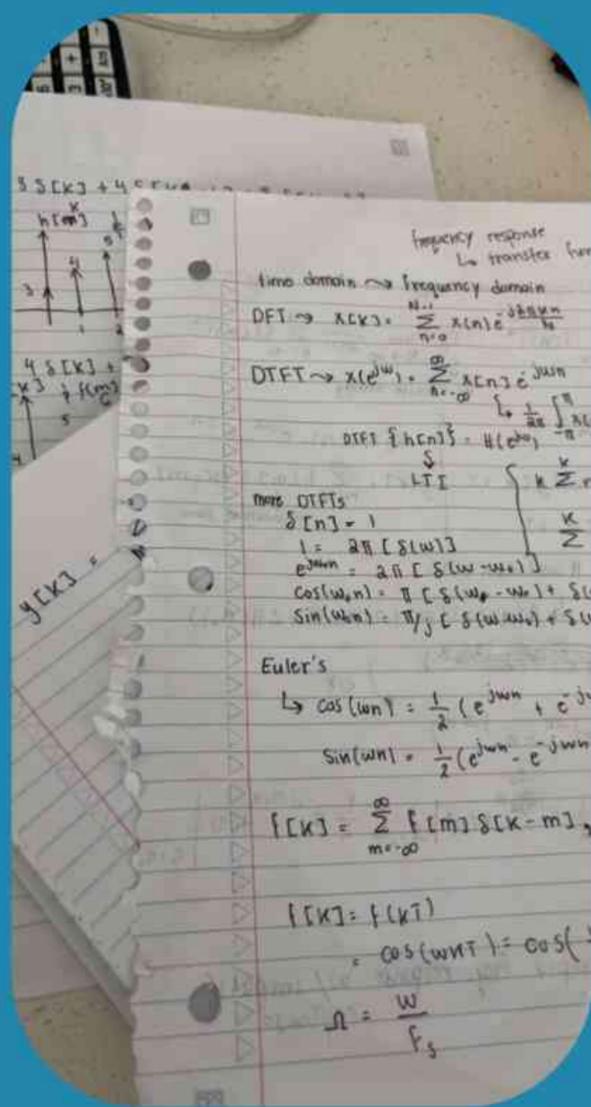
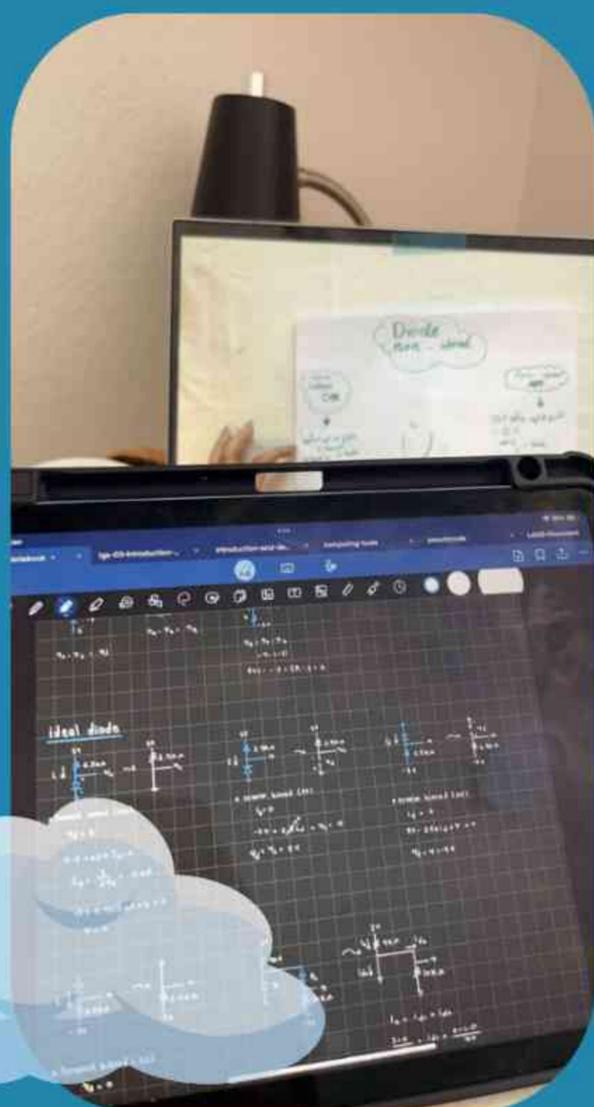
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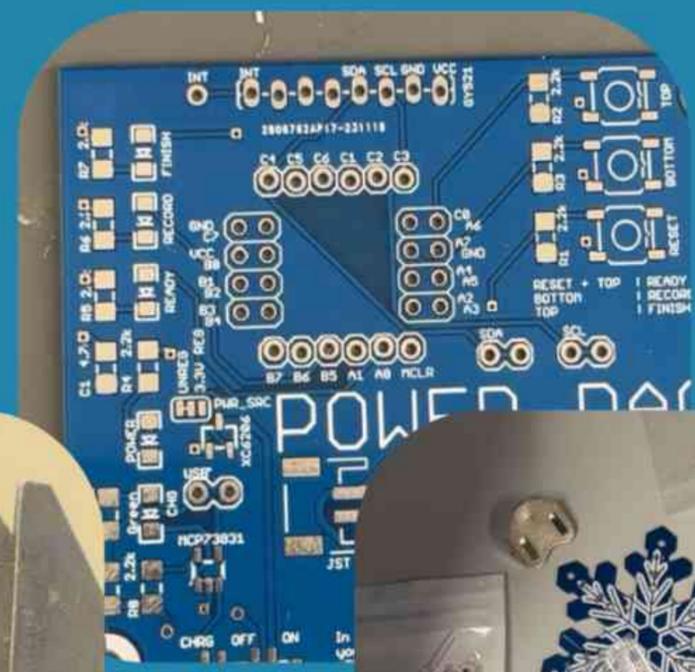
My study abroad experience at the Colorado School of Mines was truly transformative and eye-opening, I had the incredible opportunity of spending nearly five months there, starting in late December and returning home in mid-May. I didn't fully know what to expect when I first landed in Colorado but looking back I'm so grateful for everything I got to learn, the people I met, and the incredible places I got to visit while I was there.



The courses I took at Mines were some of the most challenging yet rewarding I've ever had. I enrolled in Embedded Systems, Electronic Circuits and Devices, Electromagnetics, and Signals and Systems. Devices quickly became my favorite, even though it came with weekly assignments, labs, and dense exam material, I found myself genuinely excited to attend classes and do my lab work every week. It was also the first time I learned how to solder, and I loved seeing lecture concepts come to life through hands-on work. In Embedded Systems, we even programmed our PCB boards to play music, which really showed me how creative and varied electrical engineering can be. While Electromagnetics and Signals were harder to visualize without labs, I appreciated the course structure and flexibility, especially being allowed cheat sheets in exams for Signals and taking 2-day online exams for Electromagnetics, which helped reduce a lot of anxiety compared to my usual exam seasons at KU.



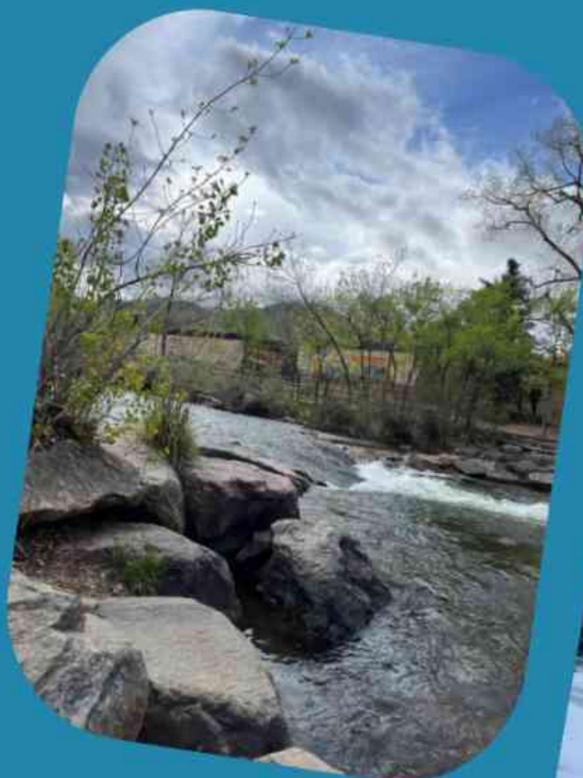
One of the most memorable parts of my academic experience was learning from Dr. Christopher Coulston, who was my Devices professor. I expected a rigid and tough professor due to the dense material of Devices, but instead found someone who was engaging, kind, and deeply insightful. He didn't just teach us how things work but he also showed us what it means to be a responsible, ethical engineer whose every tiny decision can impact society. After I shared how much I enjoyed soldering, he even gave me extra boards to practice on in my free time. I loved it so much I started spending weekends in the lab, just soldering for fun and learning about how electrical components work together to create electric circuits. That kind of encouragement and support made a lasting impact on me.



Socially, this experience opened up a whole new world for me. I shared an apartment with a Mexican-American student, and through her, I had the honor of attending a traditional Mexican wedding anniversary celebrating her godmother's parents' 50 years of marriage! I also celebrated Eid, Saudi Founding Day, and Kuwait's Independence Day with fellow students at Mines, which made me feel both connected to home and proud to represent it abroad. One of the most meaningful moments was exchanging one of my UAE pins for a South Korea pin with a classmate from my Devices class, a small gesture that captured the incredible global friendships I built. Through the Global Friends program, I also had dinner at an American household with other international students, which was another powerful reminder of how valuable cultural exchange can be.



Some of my favorite moments were spent exploring both the campus and the natural beauty of Colorado. The Mines campus is huge, and I enjoyed walking around to discover its many facilities, but my personal favorite is definitely the soldering lab. There were also so many great spots nearby that are worth visiting. One of my favorites was Cherry Creek, just a 10-minute walk from campus. It reminded me of the beach back home and helped ease some of the homesickness. Towards the end of the semester, I finally went hiking in the nearby mountains and it was such a fun and refreshing experience to see Golden from above. A bit farther out, Estes Park was absolutely breathtaking, like something out of a movie. The combination of the mountains, the snow, and the icy lake created an image that will forever be etched on my mind. In an attempt to experience things that I don't get to do back home, I also decided to go on an ice skating trip with Global Friends, where I fell more times than I could count, but I had such a great time! I met so many international students that day and had some truly meaningful conversations that kept me smiling for days after.



My favorite aspect about Colorado was how easy it was to witness the change in seasons. When I first arrived, the weather was cold and gray, which left me feeling somewhat disappointed, as I had expected Colorado to be more vibrant and naturally diverse. However, it did start snowing in January and it was freezing cold most of the time and I was buried in sweaters and coats. Later on, there was also a period where it would snow one day and it would be warm with the sun following me everywhere the next. Many people find this annoying about Colorado but I loved it because I got to experience winter, summer, and spring all within 3 months so I didn't mind it at all. I also loved seeing flowers bloom on my way to class and the huge cherry trees around campus brought me an unexpected sense of joy!



As someone who was often asked about Islam and the UAE, I was proud to act as a cultural ambassador. In fact, these conversations pushed me to reflect on my own identity and even taught me things about my culture and religion that I hadn't known before. I also handed out UAE pins and postcards to my new friends, small gesture of connection and representation that meant a lot to me. Additionally, celebrating Eid with the Saudi Club at Mines made Eid feel less lonely and I have created friendships that almost felt like family so I didn't feel homesick on Eid and Ramadan like I had anticipated initially.



Personally, I have grown tremendously. I have had meaningful conversations about faith, identity, and the world, and I've gained a deeper sense of empathy and global awareness. Professionally, I believe this experience has broadened my perspective and made me more adaptable, traits that will serve me well in any career path I choose. I've become more responsible, more confident, and more willing to challenge myself beyond my comfort zone. Most importantly, I've come to understand what it truly means to be an engineer with a global perspective - one who empathizes with others and makes conscientious, informed decisions.

I am deeply thankful to Khalifa University and the Study Abroad team for making this unique and impactful journey possible. This experience has shaped me in ways I never expected and opened many doors I never knew existed. It has inspired me to continuously push boundaries, embrace challenges, believe in my resilience, and step beyond my limits and comfort zone.

