

Academic Experience

My study abroad experience at the University of California, Berkeley, was a transformative journey that exceeded my expectations both academically and personally. Being immersed in such a dynamic and intellectually rich environment challenged me to grow in ways I hadn't anticipated. The exposure to world-class instruction, a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, and a diverse international community has left a lasting impact on me.

Academically, my courses offered a level of depth and practicality that was truly inspiring. In HUM120, I had the privilege of learning from Umair Khan and Charles Huang, both of whom have built billion-dollar companies and continue to apply their experiences in the way they teach. Every session was grounded in real-world challenges, and their mentorship helped us think like entrepreneurs. In UGBA 195A, I was taught by Aaron B. McDaniel, a successful entrepreneur with a long and insightful career. His experience enriched the course and gave us valuable tools to develop our own business ideas.



In addition, my engineering course (E29) was led by an instructor who was always supportive and knowledgeable, consistently available to answer questions. Also, we did a really great job with our group, producing a useful and “cool” product.



I also appreciated the smooth and the ease of regading process conducted online via Gradescope, which reflected the overall commitment to academic transparency and student success. The Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) were incredibly helpful and willing to support us throughout the semester, creating a welcoming and encouraging environment in every class. That was the case in all courses.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Exposure

Outside the classroom, the Bay Area's entrepreneurial spirit inspired me in many ways. As part of my business electives, I participated in the development of two startup projects: 1-Minute and CarNextDoor. These experiences pushed me to think critically, collaborate effectively, and apply the concepts we were learning in real time.



During my journey, I also had the opportunity to meet and engage with prominent figures in the startup world, including the founder of Khan Academy, Sal Khan, along with other notable entrepreneurs and venture capitalists. These interactions gave me a deeper understanding of the startup ecosystem from ideation to funding and made me even more enthusiastic about one day starting my own venture. More importantly, I aim to take this mindset back with me to Khalifa University, where I hope to contribute to fostering a similar culture of innovation.



Events and Cultural Engagement

I immersed myself in several key events that enriched my understanding of global issues and advanced technologies. I attended International Day and the AI Summit at the International House, where I engaged with students and professionals from all over the world. One of the most inspiring events I attended was the Sustainability in AI Infrastructure conference at Stanford University, hosted by Mr. Mohammed Abunayyan. The discussions at this event opened my eyes to how AI and sustainability can intersect to address major global challenges. Also, I have visited Google offices in Silicon Valley, which has given me a different view of how Google works and how large companies work exactly from the employees' view.



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*The views and opinions expressed by speakers at IHS are not necessarily shared by the University of California, Berkeley.

In addition, I was actively involved in the Arab Student Union events, which provided a sense of cultural connection and allowed me to stay rooted in my identity while sharing and learning from other Arab and international students. These events helped me maintain a strong sense of belonging while studying far from home.

Sports

Beyond academics and entrepreneurship, I also took part in the UC Berkeley Soccer League. Our team worked hard and proudly secured first place, a memorable achievement that highlighted the importance of teamwork and balance during an intense academic semester. I also really loved the mountaineer nature of Berkeley, which makes it good for hiking, which is something I love to do in my hometown Hatta.



Socially, this program was a bridge to meeting people from all over the world. Whether through class discussions, team projects, or casual conversations, I formed strong connections with inspiring individuals that I hope will lead to future collaborations.

Travel Experience in the U.S.

While my travel across the United States was somewhat limited, I made sure to explore several unique and memorable places. I visited San Francisco, Yosemite National Park, Carmel-by-the-Sea, Oakdale, and New York City. Each destination added something special to my journey from the natural beauty of Yosemite to the innovation-driven energy of San Francisco and the fast-paced vibrancy of NYC. These trips allowed me to reflect, recharge, and experience the country beyond the classroom.



Overall, the study abroad experience at UC Berkeley has significantly shaped my outlook. It has strengthened my academic foundation, deepened my entrepreneurial ambitions, and enhanced my cultural awareness. I am deeply thankful to Khalifa University for offering me this opportunity. It is my sincere hope to take everything I've learned both in and out of the classroom and bring it back to the UAE to benefit my peers, my university, and the broader community.

This was not just a semester abroad; it was the beginning of a new chapter filled with ambition, global thinking, and purpose.

