
Study Abroad Reflections

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About the University of Florida

Established in 1853, the University of Florida (UF) is a prestigious public research university and a proud member of the Association of American Universities. With a vibrant community of over 50,000 students, UF is renowned for its significant research contributions, particularly in engineering. The Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering stands out with its broad array of programs across more than 15 disciplines, from artificial intelligence to biomedical engineering.

UF encourages a hands-on approach to learning, offering students from all disciplines opportunities to engage in groundbreaking research projects. This dynamic environment not only enhances their educational experience but also prepares them for influential careers in both academia and industry. As a center of academic excellence, UF fosters innovation, addresses global challenges, and maintains extensive collaborations with other top institutions and industry leaders worldwide, making it an ideal place for ambitious students to thrive.

Additionally, UF has made Forbes' list of "New Ivies" recently, as the academic opportunities UF presents are unmatched, and there are many faculty who are eager to work with students; almost everyone I met was working on research!



The Reitz Union - the main hub on campus

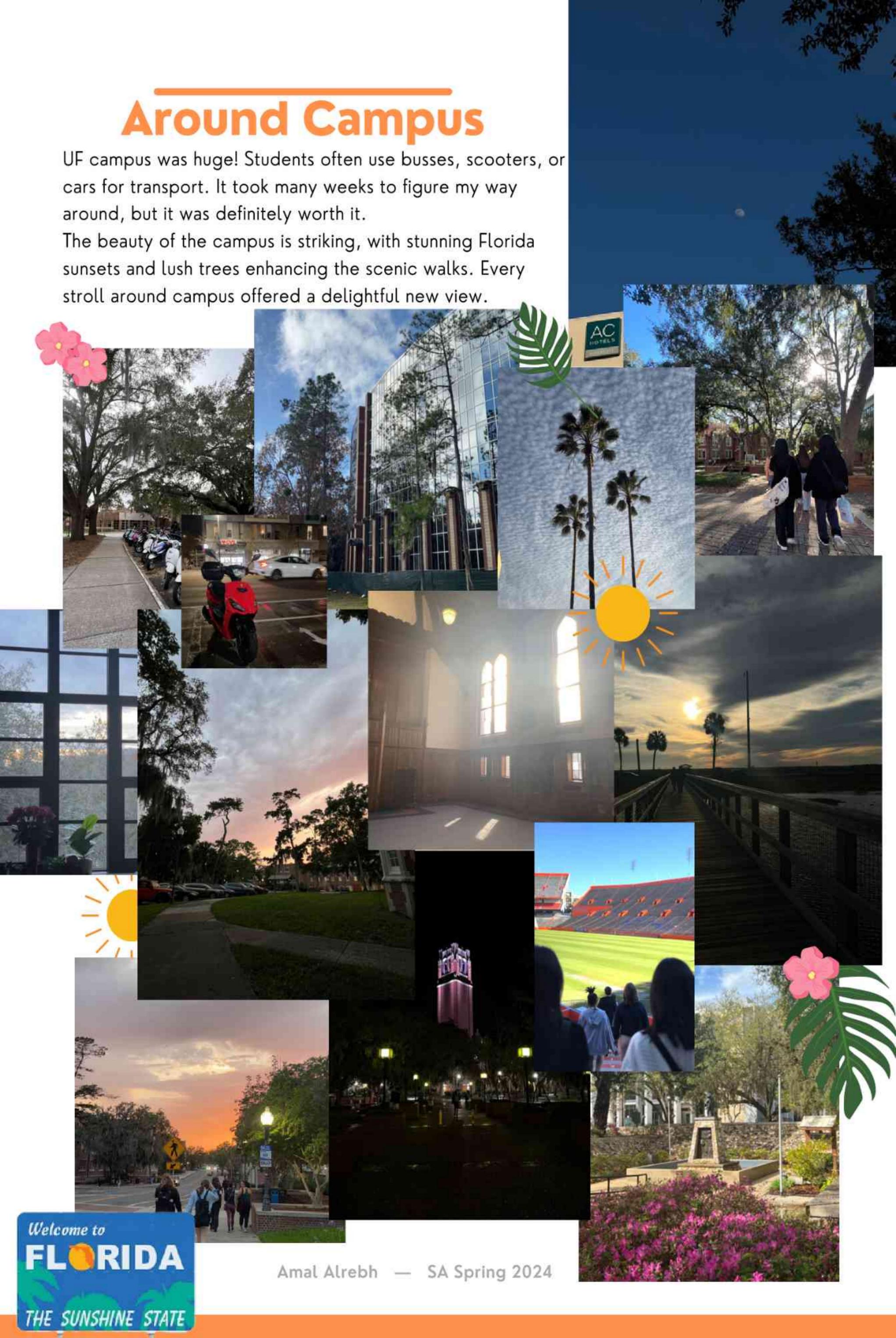


Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering

Around Campus

UF campus was huge! Students often use busses, scooters, or cars for transport. It took many weeks to figure my way around, but it was definitely worth it.

The beauty of the campus is striking, with stunning Florida sunsets and lush trees enhancing the scenic walks. Every stroll around campus offered a delightful new view.



Courses and Academics

During my stay at the University of Florida, I engaged in courses that not only challenged my thinking patterns but also significantly enhanced my engineering skills. The curriculum was carefully designed to address the essential aspects crucial for developing a competent engineer.

One of my favorite courses was on **circuit design for medical equipment**. In this course, I mastered reading and creating circuit diagrams and had the opportunity to build them in the lab, which deepened my practical understanding of the subject.

I also enrolled in a **Neural Engineering course open to both undergrad and postgrad students**, which was instrumental in honing my coding skills and analytical thinking. Being surrounded by students at a more advanced academic stage was particularly beneficial, helping me mature and refine my career goals.

Another significant course delved into the mathematics of **signal analysis**, a critical area for biomedical engineering. The rigorous approach to complex mathematical concepts was both challenging and rewarding.

Lastly, I took a course on **Global Islam**, which provided fascinating insights into how Islam is perceived and understood in a Western context like the US. This experience ignited a passion to better represent Islam and my home country, fostering a deeper commitment to cultural ambassadorship.

Overall, the courses at UF were leaning towards the practical side of education, which is both rewarding and beneficial.

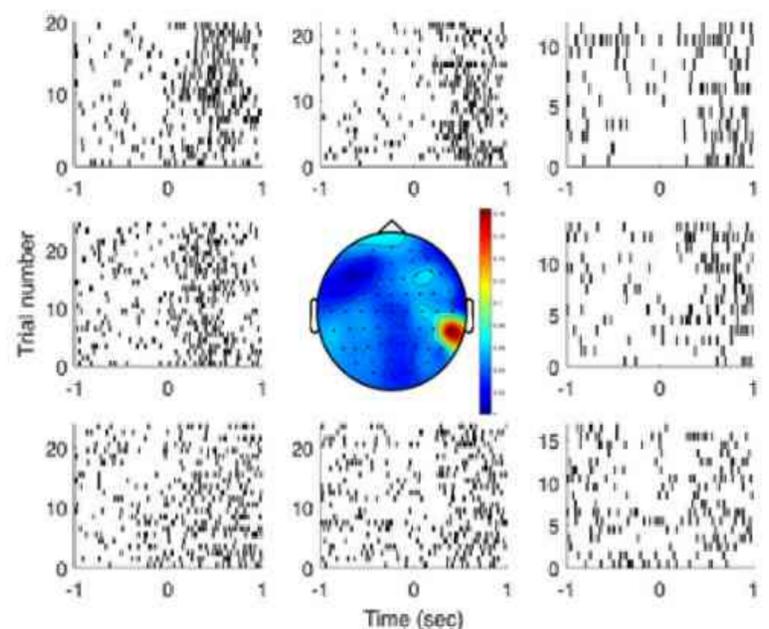
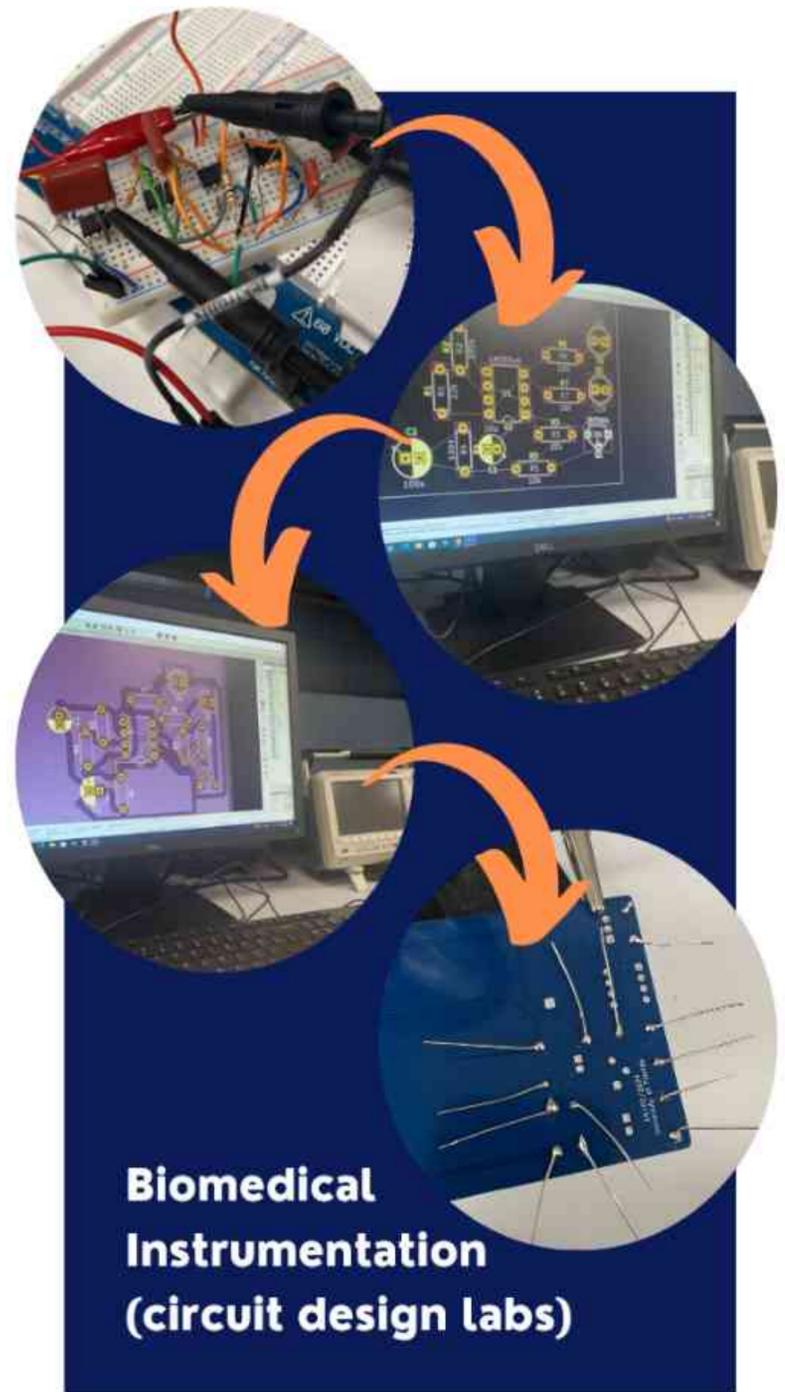


Fig. 2. Raster Plots for Neuron 1, showing trial-by-trial spiking activity relative to the go cue across eight movement directions.

**Neural Engineering
Project results**

Research!

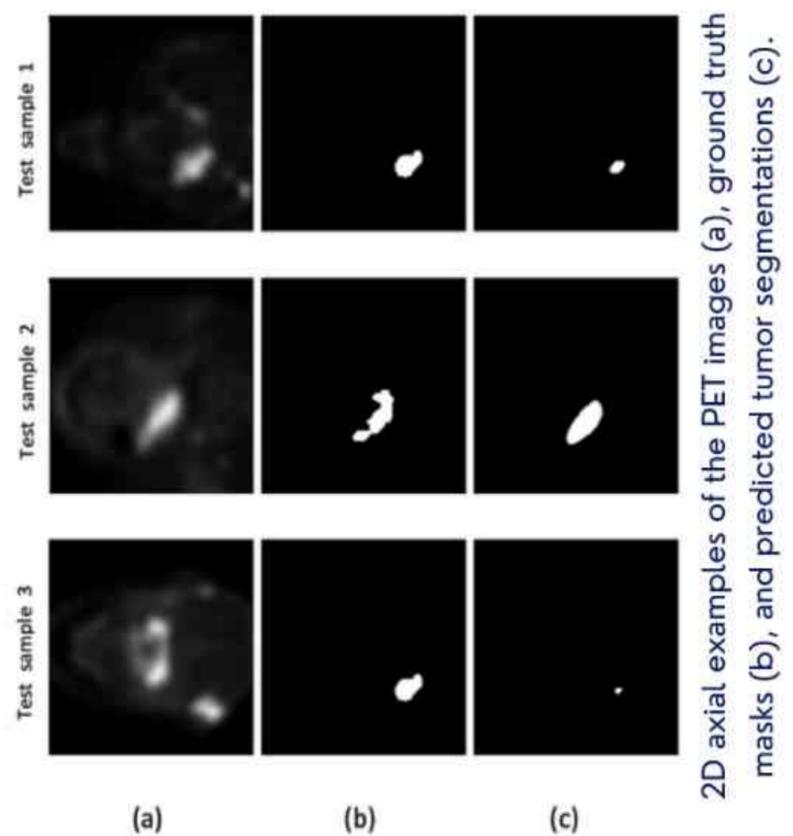
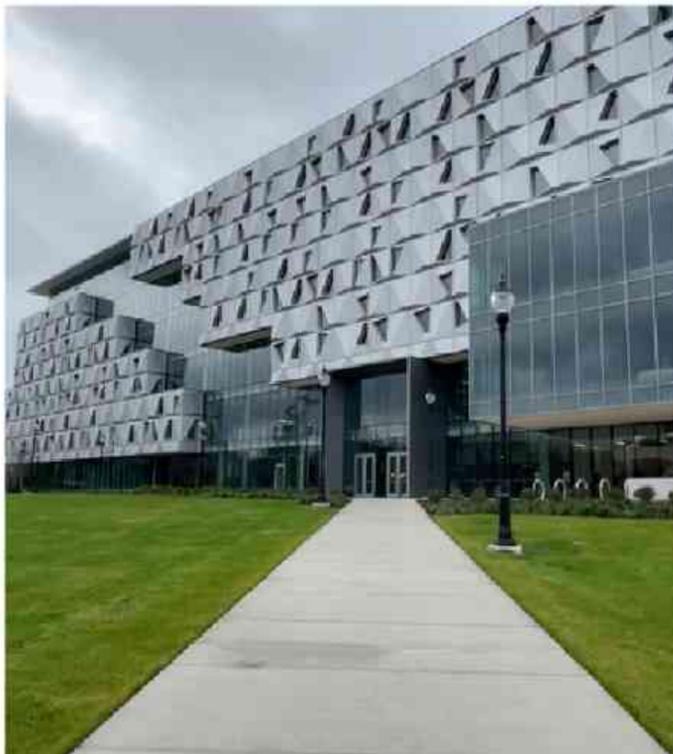
With my interest in radiology and nuclear medicine, I decided to partake in research within that field. I worked in a machine learning lab since it aligns with my career goals and is a greatly important emerging field in engineering.

I was able to learn new coding languages, optimize comp-sci programs, and utilize computing resources efficiently; I successfully created and ran a **machine learning program that accurately segments tumors from non-cancerous tissue** in medical PET scans.

I believe students at KU can benefit from understanding that you do not have to be proficient to do research. UF taught me that whole point of research is to learn along the way.

Malachowsky Hall for Data Science

My machine learning Program findings



Listed in the Lab's website as an undergraduate researcher

Find @Gong-Lab: <https://gong-lab.com> and by google search!

Undergraduate Students



Amal Alrebh
BME undergraduate student

Community and Friends

Community in UF is **unlike anything I've seen before**. I never felt so welcomed and appreciated anywhere else in such a short amount of time!

UF is a diverse campus. I was lucky to have met **students from all around the US and the world**: Venezuela, California, Vienna, Sri Lanka, the UK... and more.

I also met so many **muslims and Arabs** which made me feel home away from home, especially during Ramadan, and grew my appreciation for our similarities in thought despite our cultural differences.

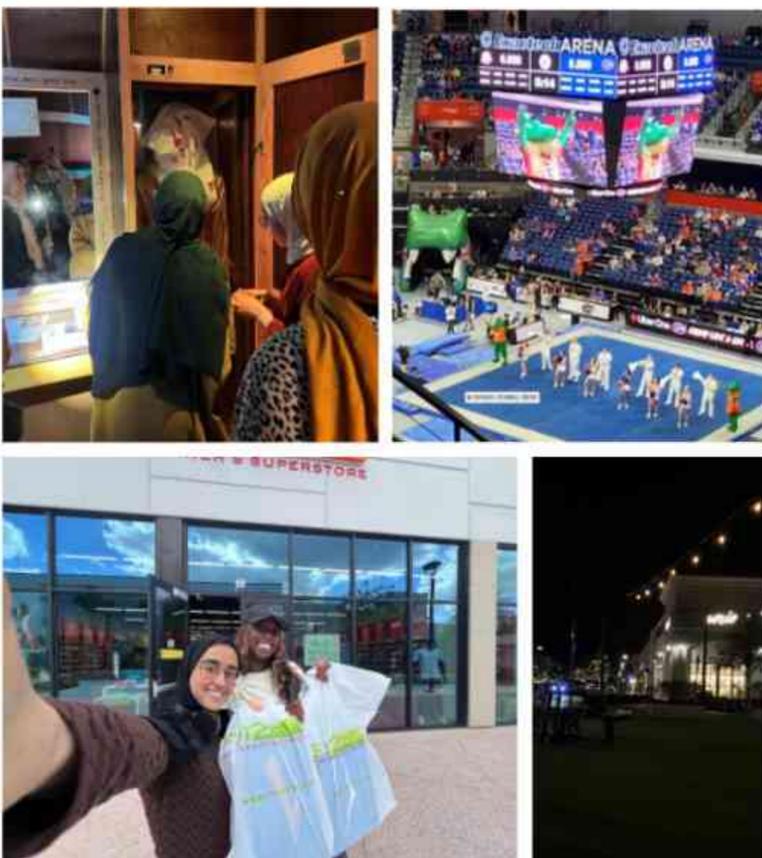
Many coffee runs :)



Many Hugs & memories...



Fun Activities!



Lifelong Friends



Travel

One of my goals in the US was to travel to other states to experience city life, nature, and people from different regions. **I was able to see first hand how people's attitudes and behaviours are shaped by their environment**, which was a great learning experience.

I got accustomed to using all forms of transport (planes, busses, trains, metros, and Uber rides) which **hightened my independence and confidence**.

Visiting Highschool Freinds in Atlanta, Georgia



New York City



Spring Break in Orlando, Florida



Solo Trip to Chicago, Illinois



Made use of long layover flights!

Extracurriculars and Personal Goals

I was lucky enough to have a supportive community at UF. This allowed me to focus on personal goals like long distance running and meeting new people through volunteering and local activities.

Volunteering

I was able to volunteer at local events and around campus; I got the chance to meet the local community as well as college students from different fields of study. It was interesting to see how people from extremely different backgrounds gather up to support each other.

Free coffee events on campus:



The Turkish and Middle Eastern Charity Food Fair:



Running

I got into running 9 months ago and completed the 10K race at Adnoc's Annual Marathon in Abu Dhabi.

I took this a step further in the US, as I was still running, especially since the weather outside was very nice!

Never was it in plan to run a half marathon during my exchange semester, but the achievement-driven culture in the US motivated me to **challenge myself and fly solo to Chicago to run the 21 kilometers!**

I enjoyed running on campus; it was also a great way to learn my way around!



The Verdict

The study abroad experience exceeded all my expectations, and I would eagerly do it again in a heartbeat. It was incredibly worthwhile; it significantly boosted my confidence and self-determination, making me believe in my ability to overcome challenging tasks.

Over the past five months, I have grown tremendously. I learned a great deal about myself, other people, and my field of study. I had the privilege of meeting passionate professors, forming loving friendships, and reconnecting with old friends in the US. The warm welcome I received at UF was truly delightful, making it an unexpectedly perfect choice for me.

Living independently, I have become more flexible, determined, and capable of handling pressures alongside my studies. Although this experience has deepened my appreciation for home-cooked meals, my high school friends, and my family, it has only made this program even more valuable.

This experience taught me that I can be both academically and socially involved, and that a balance does indeed exist, which will greatly affect my future social and academic lives.

I also am no longer fearful of completing my education abroad, and have full confidence in my abilities to deal with difficulty individually. In fact, I will be doing my summer internship abroad in Japan!

I'm excited to see where the knowledge I gained from this experience will take me.



Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the administration at KU for their unwavering determination in making this exchange program a reality for KU students. Their commitment to fostering international educational opportunities has been instrumental in the success of this initiative.

My deepest gratitude goes to the Study Abroad department for their ongoing support and confidence in students. Their dedication to providing guidance and resources has been invaluable throughout this journey. Special thanks to Ms. Joud Jabri Pickett, Ms. Maryam Rashid, and Ms. Nayef Jarad for their constant support and open communication, which ensured that this experience was not only safe but also profoundly enriching and memorable.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the registration office for their invaluable assistance before, during, and after the exchange semester. Their efficiency and support have made the administrative aspects of this program seamless, allowing me to focus fully on my academic and personal growth.

A special thank you to the Dean of Engineering for the consideration and support of the exchange courses. I am also deeply grateful to the respective professors and subject leaders for their understanding and accommodation.

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