



I participated in the exchange program at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) in March 2019, sponsored by Kamalashila Initiative. I stayed at the UCI campus for the entire Spring Quarter and this was my first experience in a Western university. I joined this exchange program with three other visiting scholars from India and Nepal. We all are from Buddhist monastic institutions, where we had been educated with the ancient Buddhist Philosophy and Culture.

Attending the exchange program at UCI was indeed an eye opening experience for us. We had never been introduced to any western system of education. There were many students from all over the world attending UCI for their college degrees, which could be obtained if they successfully completed all their assignments and projects, and scored high enough. For us, however, every interaction, contact, workshop, and the whole university community atmosphere was a major milestone for the process of learning new things.

We were trained in our monasteries with the ancient knowledge, which helps us to understand our existence, humanity, mankind, altruism, harmony, tolerance and many other profound essential philosophy and psychology. The sole aim of our knowledge is meant to serve the humanity and welfare of the universe's inhabitants, but we also realize that the world we are supposed to be connected with has leaped far beyond. The modernized world is now so digitalized, and has been narrowed down to a globalized and sophisticated society. Our UCI experience has made us realize the importance of our ancient knowledge based on moral value and human responsibility, more than ever before. The experience also helped us to understand how much we have to offer to the world. On the other hand, it allowed us to learn the reality of the existing world and how much better it now functions, which makes us realize how much we are falling behind.

Though my acquaintance with UCI was for just ten weeks, I am determined to make a crucial contribution to the community I came from, based on the knowledge I acquired while at UCI. It is at UCI that I gained a better understanding of today's world. I am sure I am now better equipped to make positive impacts in every direction I go, with the knowledge I obtained from my monastic education.

Geshe Thubten Jinpa
Visiting Scholars Program, Class of 2019