



An amazing International learning experience at - University of Szeged ‘where knowledge meets challenge’

Having arrived safely at this beautiful city of Szeged turned out to be one of the best moments of my life, as I began this amazing life as an international student. My arrival at Szeged city this September and to starting my education as an MSc Biology student in the best University of Sciences in Hungary - University of Szeged in the Faculty of Science and Informatics is truly an experience I will cherish and old dear for days, months and years to come in my future academic field as a Biologist in the field of Life Sciences.

The first question that troubles every international student in a foreign country and city away from their home country is “*Will I be able to fit in my new society?*” On my case however on my first day during my arrival, the warm reception I got from a wonderful team of mentors from the ESN (Erasmus Student Network) at the Szeged train station was truly amazing and a day I will remember for the rest of my life. It was such an encouraging gesture when I was welcomed by wonderful continuing students and mentors through the coordination of the ESN president Ms. Leona together with her team. The mentors took me to the lovely Öthalmi student hostels together with other international students and ensured I had secured a room, and had smooth, enjoyable relocation from my home country, and indeed I really felt at home and at the right place in my new environment.

My first day after visiting the city and the University of Szeged main building, I entered the International Directorate for International Studies office at the Rector’s Office, Dugonics Square 13 and Ms. Emese Baranyi together with her wonderful team in the office answered all my questions, and guided me on how to fulfill my legal requirements as an international student, like how to open a bank account, and how to make a choice of a good bank, how to apply for a Hungarian residence permit, and which documents I should carry with to the Immigration office, when to visit the Government office, and lastly visiting the tax office respectively for my

national tax number, before the stipulated deadlines. Before I left I was able to access a lot of new information about my new University, and they handed me colorful brochures and student guide books about this beautiful University of Szeged, welcoming me to this wonderful city that is surely going to be my new home away from home.

In the city of Szeged, as I strolled and walked from one street to another, I came across very beautiful buildings that host different Faculties and numerous departments that offer internationally competitive programmes and globally recognized courses both in Hungarian and English languages that are offered by a dedicated team of highly qualified and hardworking Lecturers and Professors.

On my second day at the University, as I was trying to locate the Faculty of Science and Informatics, I decided to pass near the beautiful University of Szeged Library (TIK) building and I entered the department of Geo informatics and Earth Sciences, and I really appreciate the assistance I received from Dr, Kiss Timea, as I visited the department, and she gladly welcomed me in her office, and encouraged me to utilize this precious opportunity as a Stipendium Hungaricum student, and work hard and utilize all the educational facilities in this University during my Masters programme.

My experience at the University of Szeged has enabled me to get the chance of experiencing diverse cultural exchange and many languages, from both the Hungarian students, and also the international students from different nationalities across the globe. I have had the opportunity to taste different types of foods that were rare to find back in my home country like the mushroom pizza (*gomba pizza* in Hungarian) and very sweet tasty strawberry fruits (*eper* in Hungarian) in the city of Szeged where the University buildings are situated. The Hungarian citizens have been helpful all through although very few know how to speak English and I have greatly admired their peaceful coexistence and hospitality.

The University of Szeged is also located at an easily accessible point, using the public transport system that is characterized by many easily accessible city buses and electric trains that follow a strict and well organized time schedule, and this enables the students to move easily from one faculty building to the next while attending classes. As an international student, using this public transport means and being treated just like other Hungarian students has made me to fit very well into my new environment, and also to adjust quickly into this new transport system, which is very different from the one we use at our home country.

After having enough time to settle in the city, the University together with the Directorate of International studies organized an Orientation Programme on the 13th of September 2016 at the Rectors office, which was very colorful and preceded by the Vice Rector for Foreign affairs Prof. Katalin Nagy who officially welcomed us the – Stipendium Hungaricum students for our first semester into the University. The event was well organized and prepared by Ms. Emese Baranyi

together with a hard working team of continuing University student leaders and mentors, with the help of the Erasmus Student Network through the International Office. All our issues and questions concerning the required procedures for our enrolment and scholarship guidelines were explained to us in details and it proved to be a very successful day, as I interacted with more than 100 students from over 46 different countries, who were starting their first semester at the University through the prestigious Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship.

After the orientation programme, I started my formal registration process at the Main University Library (TIK) where I was able to go through a smooth registration procedure that took less than an hour to be completed, as our Faculty educational coordinator was there to assist me together with my fellow international students in all the areas, especially regarding my courses selection and registration procedures through the University electronic system (*etr*), and she welcomed me officially as a fully registered MSc student in the Faculty of science and Informatics. All the rules were easy to understand as I found the University staff willing to assist me whenever I wanted further clarification, especially on the documents that were written in the Hungarian language, and I easily accessed the translations of the same copies!

During my second week at the University I went to the new biology building that houses many fully fitted lecture rooms and well maintained laboratories, used by many students from different departments for both MSc and PhD research projects. At the entrance, we were welcomed by a PhD student who gave us a tour of the building, the lecture rooms, and showed us through briefly explaining to us all the departments found in the biology building. After the brief and educative tour in the building, me and my fellow course mates attended our first lecturer in Microbiology. I think the experience was amazing, as the course lecturer took us through the course outline and activities of our first semester. As an international student, I really enjoyed the introductory lecture and this wonderful experience made me to realize that I will surely have an enjoyable semester, and the chance to interact with a dedicated team of lecturers willing to acquaint me with ample scientific information throughout my MSc programme.

The University of Szeged has been one of the most beautiful, spacious and fully fitted lecturer rooms that make attending a lecturer to be a wonderful experience altogether. The lecturer rooms are fitted with comfortable seats and they are very spacious and can hold hundreds of students at once during a single lecture session. The use of projectors as a teaching aid really made my first lectures to be very enjoyable, as it was very easy to see clear diagrammatic representations as the course lecturers explained the lecturer materials with the use of well-organized and clear PowerPoint slideshows.

As I reflect back on the beautiful memories I have on my first few weeks as Student in the University of Szeged, I have truly had high expectations that I will have a wonderful stay in this marvelous city and I plan to work hard, and be committed to my studies throughout my entire study period in the University. As I applied for a study opportunity in this prestigious university,

I always hoped for a positive response and I always held onto my dream of pursuing an international degree one day in my life, despite the many setbacks and financial challenges I experienced back in my home country. To me being awarded this Scholarship opportunity among the many applicants from different countries is a big dream come true! As Arnold Palmer stated *“Always make a total effort, even when the odds are against you.”* I have realized that this hard work has brought me this far and it’s a dream come true for being an international scholar, and I can’t wait to learn from my lecturers, fellow students other biologists in my department as I start my career as a future researcher and biologist in the prestigious University of Szeged, where truly I now believe it’s the only place where *‘where knowledge meets challenge!’*

Joseph Kanyi Kihika – Msc Biology student from Kenya

Faculty of Science and Informatics,

University of Szeged.