

## Rotary Global Scholar Mid-Year Report

By: Suzan Al Shammari

I have been living in central London for 111 days so far. When looking back at my time as a Rotary Global Grant Scholar studying MSc Security Studies at one of the world's top Universities, I'm filled with gratitude. It still feels surreal to be able to live and study in London while representing Rotary, more particular my home club- Long Beach.

I will begin this report by discussing my housing location in London, then discuss highlights of my time, academic progress, my Rotary host club, and future plans.

My University (University College London) location is very ideal and so is my housing. I was fortunate enough to get accepted into Goodenough College which is only a 15-minute walk from campus. Goodenough has been a place to call home these past few months. Because it has British institution ties, I was fortunate to participate in various exciting events around London. It is student housing only for international students pursuing their Masters or PhD. The criteria to get accepted into the housing is very high because spaces are limited and they give great opportunities and networks to students. Because Goodenough College has a focus on selecting students who they believe could make a difference in their education and careers, I found myself surrounded by people from all over the world. People who spend their free time volunteering, researching, and exploring various cultural activities. I met people doing their PhD on AIDS relief, using dance as a form of Alzheimer relief, aspiring pianists, Marshall Scholars, Fulbright Scholars and many others. I had the pleasure of networking and getting to know many interesting people who I believe will make a great difference in the world one day.

Besides my fortunate place of living in London, I'm lucky to be walking distance from all London's main attractions. There is never a dull moment because there is so much to do and love here. London is overwhelmingly big which was a bit terrifying at first but now I'm in the process of getting used to it. I love trying new places to eat, going to different museums on the weekends, taking a walk in the park when it's not raining (which is rare) and spending time with my friends. Before getting into my academic progress in London, I want to highlight 2 social events that occurred thanks to living at Goodenough College.

The first is the Lord Mayor's Show, which is an annual parade hosted in central London welcoming the newly elected Lord Mayor. Thousands of people attend the parade each year and it is broadcast on BBC and all other British news channels. Goodenough had a spot in the parade line up and invited members of the house to participate, I was one of the lucky few who got to the participate in the parade. We held umbrellas with the logo of the European Union and walked along with other participants from many institutions. Fun fact: Rotary of London participated in the parade as well and wore purple for polio.

Here are a few pictures from the parade

**Goodenough College members walking in the parade**



**My friend Kaite (back) and me (front) in the parade**



The second eventful highlight was seeing the Queen of England. Queen Elizabeth II is a patron of Goodenough College and she makes a visit to Goodenough every 5 years. She is due for a visit next year which is fortunate for Goodenough but unfortunate for me because I won't be there. However, she did make a visit to Coram which is one of the UK's first children's charities. Luckily, Coram is located right next to Goodenough and

when I was walking by, I was told that the Queen is coming so I waited alongside many eager people to see her and luckily for me I got to see her up-close and in person.

**Here is a picture of the unforgettable day of seeing the Queen in person**



Now on to my academic progress at University. My education in London has been intellectually challenging and has helped me grow as a student. I'm thankful for the skills I learned in and outside of the classroom. However, comparing my time at California State University Long Beach, I was a full-time student in the honors program and I worked 5 days a week, therefore, compared to my time in London I found it hard only focusing on school and no job to make me feel fulfilled. I wanted to pursue other activities besides school such as working and volunteering. However, moving to a new country meant that I needed time to settle and learn where to start about looking for jobs or volunteer opportunities. Because I only had school to focus on, I was able to complete all 4 final assessments for my classes 1 month before they were due. This gave me the ability to not stress over assessments and allow myself time to look for internships in London.

Today, day 111 in London, is the first day of my second term of my Masters program. I have submitted and completed all my work for my first term and I will begin a Research Fellowship with the University next week. I applied and was fortunate to be selected for a position with my University's research center. I will be showcasing research progress as part of my fellowship, as well as organizing a festival in the spring geared towards student engagement and education. I'm very excited to begin focusing on other activities besides school and this fellowship will give me work experience and provide an opportunity to learn.

Now I will discuss the progress of my host club in London- Sidcup Rotary Club. I was invited by my host sponsor to attend a Rotary meeting in September. Everyone was very kind and were interested in knowing how the Rotary Club of Long Beach functions and the impact it has on the community. I was happy to answer their questions and tell them a bit about what I'm doing in London and my focus thus far. I'm also blessed with a kind sponsor, Raymond D'Silva, my club sponsor and his wife Lorna have been very kind and attentive to me. From train station pick-ups to home cooked meals to email check ins, they have made me feel like I belong and I'm very thankful to them. I have truly enjoyed learning about how Rotary functions in London and observing the similarities and uniqueness of Rotary clubs. Although clubs may be different in sizes, locations, demographics etc. they all still carry the same message. Service to others. My future plans with London Sidcup Rotary Club is to attend other London Club meetings and present to them on my progress and my work. I'm also due to present to Sidcup Rotary in May so I look forward to sharing with them my progress and plans.

Taken at Global Scholars Welcome dinner in October  
**Ray D'Silva Chairman of Foundation, Committee Members  
Susan Dowsell and Peter Nathanail of the Sidcup Rotary Club**



It is difficult to have many downs when you are living in one of the best cities in the world. But what I have found difficult thus far is missing my Long Beach community. I said that London is overwhelmingly big and unfortunately that means you feel as if you can be lost in the crowd. This is something I'm not used to because Long Beach is a big city but with a small-town feel. However, I see this as a blessing. Through this experience, I have learned to appreciate what I have back home and to enjoy life as it is in London but at the same time appreciate the people and the life I love in Long Beach. Samuel Johnson said it best.. "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life"

My future goal for this upcoming year is to volunteer with local refugee organizations. This would be a great opportunity to bring my own background as a former refugee and use my skills to help people as well as gain experience in the field of refugees and immigration. Besides future plans of various Rotary presentations, I hope to finish my assessments for this term early as well so that I can begin my search for a full-time job in my field.

My time in London has been exciting and full of adventures and I'm constantly thankful that Rotary chose to believe in me and my education. I have been given the opportunity to receive an education and represent Rotary and for that I'm very grateful. I look forward to holding Rotary's mission close to my heart and represent the Long Beach club in the best way I can.

## Pictures

First day of Grad School



**Exploring Victoria and Albert Museum on the weekend**



**Horseback riding with Goodenough College**



**Afternoon Tea to celebrate my 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday at Kensington Palace**



**Afternoon walk in the park next to my campus**

