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Saturday

Borneo Bulletin  
**WEEKEND**



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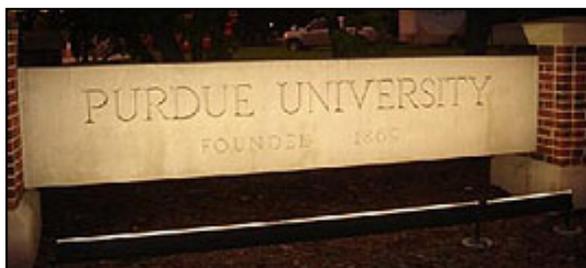
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## Features

### Diary of a Bruneian Fulbrighter

By Vivi Jafiana Dato Paduka Hj Ja'afar

#### Part II: Life at Purdue



Purdue University



Greater Lafayette Islamic Center



Downtown Lafayette



**Engineering Mall Fountain**

Hello again. First and foremost I'd like to wish everyone 'Selamat Berpuasa'.

We're already in October - leaves have started turning yellow which officially marks the arrival of the fall season.

The weather has been quite forgiving this week with occasional rain and thunderstorms. The past few weeks have been rather cold, the coldest being 9C going all the way down to 3C in the evenings.

If you read the first part of my article, perhaps you are wondering what it is like to live and study here in the USA. In this week's installment, I'm going to share with you my experiences so far ever since I arrived here in late July 2006.

Let me begin by telling you a little bit about my place of study. Purdue University was founded in 1869 by John Purdue with 6 instructors and 39 students.

Today, Purdue has a system wide enrollment of over 69, 000 students and considered as the nation's leading research institution with a reputation for excellent and affordable education.

The US News ranks Purdue at no. 6 in the 2007 best graduate engineering school in the USA just after MIT, University of Stanford, University of Berkeley, Georgia Tech and University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. Purdue has 5 campuses in total and West Lafayette is the main campus (where I am studying).

In the main campus alone, there are more than 200 major areas of study. I am currently enrolled in the School of Electrical & Computer Engineering for a Masters Degree in Computer Engineering with concentration in embedded systems and its applications.

Sports are a major thing here - especially football i.e. American football, as with all other universities in the USA. Our football team is one of the top in the University League and is known as the Boiler Makers with gold and black as the official color.

We even have our own Purdue song entitled 'Hail Purdue' - a tune loudly and passionately chanted by Boiler Maker fans during each game.

I haven't been to any of the games yet, perhaps I should try, just to experience the atmospheric rush and excitement of Purdue football.....but maybe after I learn the Purdue song?

After pretty much being pampered and 'spoiled' with much fun for a week in Nebraska, my early days in West Lafayette gradually got busy and reached to a point where I felt the days just passes by so quickly.

On top of settling down, I had another two rounds of orientation to attend. Prior to that, I had to attend the international student's check-in session where we sort out all paperwork and formalities such as registration, setting up of system user accounts, social security and medical matters.

The first one was for all international students and the warm up was fun. There were about 200 international students gathered in the huge lecture theatre in my department that morning. We were all grouped according to the countries where we came from.

I (Brunei) was in third place right after a student from Angola and one from Australia. Each of us had to step up front and say where we were from and to greet everyone in their native language.

The largest group was China followed by India and Taiwan. They were such large groups so much so when they greeted everyone in their native languages as a whole it was like a mini concert echoing through the theatre.

Other activities during this session include talks on student visa, insurance, US law, language courses etc.

The second orientation was for all graduate students in the School of Electrical & Computer Engineering department. This session touched on the important stuff concerning our program, selection of courses, university ethics, thesis, qualifiers etc.

What I really like about the system here is that we are liberty to choose courses that we want to build up credit hours.

To qualify for full time status, I have to take up 9 credit hours of study per semester which is equivalent to three courses, with one being a core. It might not seem like much but studies have been pretty hectic ever since classes started on August 21.

Two weeks later it was mid term already!

I'm learning a lot of new things and exchanging ideas with so many friends and professionals which truly is a remarkable and valuable experience. The past few weeks alone we had seminars attended by representatives from IBM, Google, Boeing, General Motors, AMD, Microsoft and Motorola.

Now, allow me to give you a little insight into the place where I'm calling home throughout the duration of my studies here in the USA.

The city of West Lafayette is located in the north-central part of the state of Indiana, which is just an hour drive from the capital - Indianapolis.

West Lafayette is home to about 29,000 people. Across the bridge from West Lafayette is downtown Lafayette - a small city with beautiful turn-of- the century architecture, historic neighbourhoods and inviting public areas. This is where major businesses, restaurants and services are concentrated.

Food is not a problem here as halal meat is easily available from a grocery store located on campus (they do deliveries too) and there are also a few restaurants which serve halal food.

There is also a mosque on campus. During this Ramadan period, everyday there is breaking of fast or Sungkai at the mosque on campus for single men and women for free. Each day Muslim families take turn in making food and send them to the mosque. The Terawih prayers are also being performed every night.

Here at Purdue, there is a Muslim student society and also Women Muslim society. In fact there are over 200 student societies here on campus ranging from religion to music, arts to sports all the way to bungee jumping and flying Cessna airplanes - there is truly something for everyone here!

There are no skyscrapers or subways as one would probably expect from a US city.

West Lafayette offers a good study environment due to its small size, tranquil atmosphere and the warm and friendly people.

Another fact is that living expenses here are also very reasonable. In a way, you get fewer distractions compared to living in bigger metropolitan cities.

West Lafayette is also close to major cities such as Chicago IL and Columbus OH - with Chicago being two hours away by car.

Next week is October break and I'll be going on a trip to Chicago. I'll be sharing the Chicago experience with you in my next article. Till then, and as they say here in America 'Have a nice day!'

The author is the 2006 recipient of prestigious US Fulbright Scholarship. For more information on the Fulbright Program in Brunei, go to [http://brunei.usembassy.gov/fulbright\\_program.html](http://brunei.usembassy.gov/fulbright_program.html)



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