To The Study Abroad Board,

My name is Matthew Portnoy and I am a sophomore in the Economics program in the College of Business here at Loyola. I am writing this letter in order to be considered for a Direct Enrollment program at Hong Kong City University (HKCU). Ever since travelling in Europe I’ve wanted to go to a place where I can escape western tradition. Hong Kong, due to its business orientation and economic importance, was the natural choice destination for my Study Abroad destination. Also, the prevalence of the English language makes Honk Kong seem like an easier adjustment. I was accepted to the Syracuse University program at HKCU. Nevertheless, I have looked into doing the program without them and have decided that it is the superior option for me. In short, their program is gratuitously over priced in my opinion.

In choosing China, a country with a favorable exchange rate, I am looking to subsidize a semester at Loyola. The price of twelve credits at HKCU is 33,600 Hong Kong Dollars or 4,400 USD, which is substantially less than what I pay currently. The amount of 4,400$ is also far greater than the 17,000 that Syracuse wanted. I have investigated housing on the internet and have discovered that it will be comparable to what I am paying now. Food and other commodities I have learned will be a good deal less expensive. Additionally, the Syracuse University program had a 7,500 USD trip though Asia, which started their program. Syracuse’s program lasted approximately two weeks and travelled in two countries. For less money I could spend more time seeing more countries, and I personally would prefer this option.

If allowed to, I will be taking the same classes at HKCU as I would be if I went through Syracuse, I will be just be doing it at a lesser rate. I understand that with a program there would be a faculty member of a program in charge of me but as a highly self-motivated individual, I think I can survive with out it. This semester I participated in the Loyola Peace Conference, writing a paper that was over 20 pages and presenting my research to an audience. Additionally, I take six courses, I have participated in an Institute for Humane Studies weekend conference, and am currently attempting to make Loyola University a broadcast hub for the TEDxRamallah conferences. Many of my interests are academic in nature and I am attracted to the courses I would be taking at HKCU. The classes I have looked into are very interesting and not currently offered at Loyola. Three out of the four I intend on taking, focus directly on Asia, and I would very much like to study Asian subject matter in Asia.

In order to prepare myself I have looked into housing, applications, and Visas. Luckily for me I know several people who spent time in Hong Kong. I’ve spoken with and had email correspondence with a friend who studied at HKCU, a family friend who spent a year living in Hong Kong and to various people who have travelled there. A thing I’ve heard more than once, is that easier to get around with English in Hong Kong compared with some neighboring places, i.e. Thailand, Vietnam, Mainland China, etc. Since Hong Kong was a British Colony until 1997
this makes sense to me. I’ve also spent time reading about demographics in Hong Kong. It’s true that the expat community has shrunk over the last decade, however, with many whites (British and Americans) leaving there’s been a big influx of other nationalities. Time Magazine, among others, often calls Hong Kong to be a truly international city. That’s the reason why I love New York City and the reason why I anticipate loving Hong Kong.

One advantage for me if I am allowed to go to Hong Kong is that I have two internship leads there that I have begun to pursue. These are thanks to familial connections that each of my roommates have and contact information they have provided me with. One connection is at Goldman Sachs and the other is at Chase bank. The two connections are with high ranking officials at each institution. I’ve sent out emails and resumes to each and am waiting to hear back. It’s really a fantastic opportunity for me and having an international internship is really a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Additionally, I have contacted my health insurance provider and have begun looking into insurance for abroad. My father travels abroad often, occasionally in Asia and since we are on the same insurance I do not anticipate a problem. A few weeks past while at a Musician Clinic event I mentioned my goal of studying abroad in Hong Kong and have been put in contact with a woman named Allison Goodman. Ms. Goodman is a fellow New Orleanian who will be moving to Hong Kong a few months prior to my hopeful departure. She recently got a job at a university there and will be a familiar face for whenever it is I need one.

If permitted to go to Hong Kong this will not be my first time travelling on my own. I have been travelling alone domestically since age fourteen. At age twenty I went abroad independently and had a fantastic time. I spent two months in Europe arranging my own travel and lodging as I went. I am not put off by hostels and unfamiliar places, on the contrary, I tend to love these situations and I thrive in them. The purpose of travelling for me is not to have photos for Facebook or to go party in new places. If I desired to be in a great party destination, I would stay here in New Orleans. In all honesty, I value travel as having a great amount of inherent worth. It is an activity which is good in and of its self. My largest goal personally is to acclimate as much as I can to a new culture. My largest goal academically has to do with the political reality of Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region. As a student of economics under professors who are libertarian, Austrian Economists we are perpetually talking about the importance of economic freedom and liberty. Hong Kong is consistently ranked high in economic freedom and in 2011 was ranked second highest in terms of ease of doing business. The CATO institute ranks it as having the highest degree of economic freedom. Mainland China, while important to business, is ranked as the 82nd in freedom, compared to Hong Kong who is number one. As a person who discusses and believes in the importance of economic freedom as a necessity for economic growth I want to be in a country that believes in and pursues that ideal in the way that Hong Kong does. This fact makes the opportunity of an internship even more important to me.
In regards to housing I have begun to familiarize myself with the market. If I am permitted to study abroad my plan is to contact several potential homes prior to leaving, via email. I have looked at Craigslist and have found available rooms in the Kowloon and Wanchai neighborhoods. Kowloon being preferable due to it’s proximity to the university; however Wanchai has easy access to the MTR (Mass Transit Railway). I intend on staying in a hostel for the first week or so while I meet with potential room mates and see which apartment is most suitable for me. Additionally, HKCU has a service which helps visiting students find off campus housing. I can not begin to use this until I am accepted, however if allowed to go, I will use this service as well.

In regards to moving forward, my application is contingent on approval and I have learned that the school has rolling admissions, making this arrangement suitable. The visa is delivered within a week of application and if permitted I will get the necessary Visa in New York City while home for my Mother’s graduation, the week of May 15th. I have looked into this plan in great depth and hope the information provided is sufficient to grant me permission. I’ve had my heart set on Hong Kong for several months, and was extremely disappointed when Syracuse proved to be too expensive. Nevertheless, I really value travel and hope to gain your consent as to have this experience. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Matthew Portnoy