Age: 22  
Hometown and Country: Los Gatos, California, USA  
Home University: University of California, San Diego  
Study Program: Computer Science

Semester in Amsterdam  
The program at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam allows me to fulfill the strict requirements of my degree back home in a diverse and international environment while also providing an excellent location to explore the rest of Europe. The staff are supportive and friendly and have helped me to quickly resolve any issues that came up. The excursions and trips we have taken have all been a blast.

Dutch Culture  
I had visited Amsterdam once before but only for a couple of days. I love the architecture and the incredible number of things that are always happening around the city. The city is gorgeous; I absolutely love being able to bike anywhere I need to go. There is a diverse range of events which are constantly being held all over the city and change every week.  
Dutch culture really is unique. People are not overly talkative and are direct and to the point. It is not unusual to get called out immediately on your mistakes but not in a derogatory sense. The Dutch students I have met have been friendly and outgoing, and they are happy to explain whatever you want to know.

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam  
Class sizes are much smaller and much longer than my courses back home. The workload is quite a bit lighter, but the classes do move very fast given they only last seven weeks. Emphasis is placed more on the material and discussions than on the exams, although tests still count for the majority of your grade.

Hidden Gems  
There's a bunch of cool bars and clubs around Rembrantplein and Leidseplein that are fun to hop around. Near the VU, there is a great little sandwich shop called Dagelijks Lekker where everything on the menu is exactly €1.80. It’s right next to market33, a nice upscale food court, and Caffe Belmondo which gives students 20% off of everything. De Amsterdamse Bos (the Amsterdam Forest) is beautiful and also has a couple of cool cafes hidden within its bounds.