

Final Report

Majors: Political Science, Economics

Degree: Polyvalent Two-Majors Bachelor

Host country: USA

Duration: August 2018 – May 2019

Host University: Michigan State University

Identification Code: USA-2019-1LH98-m

Please give some advice on the living, working and studying conditions which might be helpful for future exchange students.

In terms of preparation for the exchange program I would recommend starting early. It is a lot of work, but most of it is not hard and doing it step by step really helps. Always have a list with all the deadlines to keep track of the thing you still have to do. The visa process is not too complicated, but it takes some effort and showing up at an embassy or a consulate of the US is mandatory. The best airports to arrive at are Chicago O'Hare or Detroit Wayne County. Chicago is a bit cheaper but getting to East Lansing from there is not easy. I believe it takes 5 hours by train and there are not too many trains per day. The best option is to fly to DTW and take the Michigan Flyer Bus. It takes around 2 hours to get to East Lansing and there's a bus every hour.

Getting health insurance is very recommendable. The health insurance provided by MSU costing \$2000 is very expensive compared to the 400€-500€ for the insurance offered by ADAC or

Hansemerkur. Although MSU has very strict rules about the acceptance of health insurances other than their own, my health insurance got accepted.

The transportations system in East Lansing and the US in general is not very sophisticated. There are a few buses, but no tram in East Lansing. I would recommend renting a bike for the fall semester and taking the bus or walking in the spring semester.

In general, getting a credit card is a very good idea, since it is the default payment system. Whether you pay for your Uber taxi or rent a car, you need a credit card for that.

General impression of the host institution or the host university

MSU is not an elite university, but still a very good one. Especially the business college and James Madison College (public affairs) do have some interesting, well taught classes. In case help or advice regarding any of the coursework is needed, most professors are happy to help. Doreen and Nick from the International Office at MSU take care of any other issues that may come up. Or at least they can refer you to the person responsible for that kind of issue.

A thing I liked to do is to go to the so-called Kaffeestunde, a weekly meeting of mostly students wanting to learn German. There are people with all kinds of background and levels of language proficiency. Most of them are very nice people and thankful to get some input from a native speaker.

Content and purpose of your academic exchange

The general education level in the US is not as good as in Germany. That means, US students start at a lower level. While learning the language still can be a real challenge, one should not be afraid to sign up for higher level courses after two years of study in Freiburg or elsewhere in Germany. As an example, I took both, *Introduction to Macroeconomics* and *Intermediate Macroeconomics*, at MSU. While *Intro to Macroeconomics* was very basic and would not have been enough to get the credits for *Makro I* in Freiburg, *Intermediate Macroeconomics* covered exactly the theoretical models and concepts taught in *Makro I*.

On the other hand, teaching in the US is less theoretical. The professors try to keep their students engaged. In a research class we had to do real field work instead of just reading and talking about the concepts.

Criticism and recommendations

Besides the insights about the American academic system, I learned a lot about myself during the time abroad. I would definitely do that exchange program to MSU again.