

Intermediate Report

DEGREE: BACHELOR ENGLISH AND COMPUTER SCIENCE
HOST COUNTRY: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
START AND END DATE: AUGUST 28TH 2018 - MAY 13TH 2019
HOST UNIVERSITY: UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN MADISON

How was your arrival and the first week in your host country ? Were you provided with any introductory information and if so, was it helpful ?

My arrival was very stressful and I did not enjoy it at all. Because of thunderstorms in Chicago, my flight from Chicago to Madison was delayed for 5-6 hours. On my flight back to Germany for winter break from Madison to Chicago United Airlines ended up paying passengers thousands of dollars to get out of the plane because the flight was overbooked, which again resulted in a huge delay. My experience of taking the bus from Chicago to Madison however is not much better because of other unprofessional practices. I found traveling from Chicago to Madison overall very stressful - but I would recommend taking the bus just because it saves hundreds of dollars and is about equally as stressful as taking a flight. However, if you are traveling with a chicken, I would recommend to fly.

I was provided with all the information freshmen at this university were provided with and had to sit in with an additional visa info session that provided no information beyond what you should already know if you read the necessary information online. The pinnacle was a 20 minute video about that you should make sure that your visa and your passport does not expire. Milk goes bad way sooner than your visa and nobody warned me about that before living in the dorms.

There was also a bunch of introductory events for international students I only vaguely remember - but I remember that there were always great free snacks and nice people.

My first week was great. Americans are generally very friendly and I found friends quickly. Making friends in the dorms (University Housing) was very easy, but in class it is surprisingly difficult to create meaningful connections.

Were you able to deal with all formalities (course selection, accommodation, insurance etc.) ?

Yes. With course selection, I recommend to figure out what courses you want to take as soon as possible because you will need to obtain permission by the respective professor to join most classes as an exchange student. When it comes to insurance, keep in mind that UW has their own insurance called SHIP you are required to have if you study here, except if you are eligible to apply for a waiver - which is only possible for very special cases.

What was your highlight of the first weeks ?

It is surprisingly hard to remember the first few weeks, although I remember that I very much enjoyed the food, especially the desserts, at the Dining Halls. Additionally, there were many free welcome events that were a blast. And I got to enjoy sunny warm weather for a few weeks, which was a highlight because Wisconsin gets really cold really fast.

What do you perceive as unfamiliar, strange and/or different from Germany ?

Everybody is incredibly welcoming and nice. As a German, it is sometimes hard to adapt to the level of niceness and not come off as cold. The only thing I found unfamiliar is that most American students move in with the help of their family and parents and that there are family weekends where families visit their students. Professors are down to earth and make their lectures entertaining and fun and do not serenade unwilling listeners with a painful 100 slide powerpoint and a bit of mumbo jumbo. Lectures are shorter so you can actually pay attention the whole time. Also, because the United States is a more individualistic country compared to Germany, individual differences and different identities are more valued and more accepted.

Please describe the course of a typical weekday in a few sentences. In addition, please send us a copy of your class schedule and describe the differences in comparison with your schedule at the University of Freiburg. What will your schedule for the second semester look like ?

I get up, I eat breakfast, I go to class, I eat lunch, I go to class, I eat dinner, I study/procrastinate/hang out/make music, I shower, I go to bed. There is much more

homework at UW Madison than there is in Freiburg - so you should be prepared to spend more time outside of lectures doing assignments. This is however much better, because factoring in the numerous assignments throughout the semester into the grading relieves a lot of pressure during the finals.

My schedule differs significantly from my schedule at the University of Freiburg, mainly because many computer science classes are not directly accredited and I have already completed the requirements for my English major. This is why I am taking most classes for personal development, because I noticed it is not about studying towards a degree, it is about making yourself the most skilled person for the kind of job and life you strive to have. For example, Communication Arts 368 in the Fall Semester was about how to persuade people and (how to resist) persuasion is a very helpful skill for your professional and personal life.

Units Taken		16.00		Textbooks							
Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
6:00AM						6:00AM					
7:45AM						7:45AM					
8:50AM		Enrolled COMP SCI 579 LEC - 001 9:30AM - 10:45AM Location: TRA		Enrolled COMP SCI 579 LEC - 001 9:30AM - 10:45AM		8:50AM		Enrolled COM ARTS 355 LEC - 001 8:50AM - 9:40AM VILAS 4070		Enrolled COM ARTS 355 LEC - 001 8:50AM - 9:40AM VILAS 4070	
9:55AM		Enrolled COMP SCI 579 LEC - 001 9:30AM - 10:45AM	Enrolled COM ARTS 368 DIS - 302 9:55AM - 10:45AM GRAINGER 2195	Enrolled COMP SCI 579 LEC - 001 9:30AM - 10:45AM		9:55AM	Enrolled E ASIAN 102 DIS - 301 9:55AM - 10:45AM SOC SCI 6121	Enrolled E ASIAN 102 DIS - 301 9:55AM - 10:45AM SOC SCI 6121	Enrolled E ASIAN 102 DIS - 301 9:55AM - 10:45AM SOC SCI 6121	Enrolled E ASIAN 102 DIS - 301 9:55AM - 10:45AM SOC SCI 6121	Enrolled E ASIAN 102 DIS - 301 9:55AM - 10:45AM SOC SCI 6121
11:00AM	Enrolled E ASIAN 101 DIS - 302 11:00AM - 11:50AM SOC SCI 4322	Enrolled E ASIAN 101 DIS - 302 11:00AM - 11:50AM SOC SCI 4322	Enrolled E ASIAN 101 DIS - 302 11:00AM - 11:50AM SOC SCI 4322	Enrolled E ASIAN 101 DIS - 302 11:00AM - 11:50AM SOC SCI 4322	Enrolled E ASIAN 101 DIS - 302 11:00AM - 11:50AM SOC SCI 4322	11:00AM		Enrolled COMP SCI 540 LEC - 001 11:00AM - 12:15PM VAN VLECK B130		Enrolled COMP SCI 540 LEC - 001 11:00AM - 12:15PM VAN VLECK B130	
12:05PM		Enrolled COMP SCI 537 LEC - 001 1:00PM - 2:15PM GRAINGER 1100		Enrolled COMP SCI 537 LEC - 001 1:00PM - 2:15PM GRAINGER 1100		12:05PM	Enrolled COM ARTS 300 LEC - 001 12:05PM - 12:55PM VILAS 4070	Enrolled COMP SCI 540 LEC - 001 11:00AM - 12:15PM	Enrolled COM ARTS 300 LEC - 001 12:05PM - 12:55PM VILAS 4070	Enrolled COMP SCI 540 LEC - 001 11:00AM - 12:15PM	
1:30PM	Enrolled COM ARTS 368 LEC - 001 1:20PM - 2:10PM VILAS 4070	Enrolled COMP SCI 537 LEC - 001 1:00PM - 2:15PM		Enrolled COMP SCI 537 LEC - 001 1:00PM - 2:15PM		1:20PM					
2:25PM			Enrolled COMP SCI 537 DIS - 302 3:30PM - 4:20PM ENGR HALL 2345			2:25PM	Enrolled COM ARTS 355 LAB - 308 3:00PM - 4:55PM VILAS 2060		Enrolled COM ARTS 355 LAB - 308 3:00PM - 4:55PM VILAS 2060	Enrolled COM ARTS 300 DIS - 605 2:25PM - 3:15PM GRAINGER 2195	
3:30PM						3:30PM		Enrolled E ASIAN 102 LEC - 001 4:45PM - 6:00PM VAN HISE 494			
4:35PM	Enrolled E ASIAN 101 LEC - 001 4:45PM - 6:00PM VAN HISE 514			Enrolled E ASIAN 101 LEC - 001 4:45PM - 6:00PM VAN HISE 514		4:35PM	Enrolled COM ARTS 355 LAB - 308 3:00PM - 4:55PM	Enrolled E ASIAN 102 LEC - 001 4:45PM - 6:00PM VAN HISE 494	Enrolled E ASIAN 102 LEC - 001 4:45PM - 6:00PM VAN HISE 494		
10:00PM						10:00PM		Enrolled E ASIAN 102 LEC - 001 4:45PM - 6:00PM VAN HISE 494			

Fall Semester 2018

Spring Semester 2019

Please tell us about a great and/or formative experience (e.g. a party, university life, food, sports etc.)

I feel an incredible pride in studying at this University and I love the “you can do it” mentality that is spread around campus. This University tells you that the sky is the limit and this is really true. It is very motivating to have professors that actually know people that are behind some of the biggest inventions and what brand of wine they like to drink or have done breakthrough research personally. Hearing of former students

that now work at great American companies and earn 7 figures is also motivating. In Freiburg there is a disconnect between Academia and the Economy, while UW Madison looks at giving you the tools directly you need to succeed at the workplace.

Taking courses outside of your major to broaden your horizon is very easy to do as well, and I love that I can study Chinese and filmmaking as a regular university course even though they are not directly related to my majors. Speaking of which, a large proportion of the student corpus is from China - which you might find intriguing if you are studying Chinese or are interested in Chinese culture.

Please complete the following sentence: ... is what I miss the most.

My cat and my full sized keyboard is what I miss the most. I know this is different for different kinds of people, but I have not been homesick once because UW's environment is very stimulating, inviting and relaxing. It is big enough of a city to be fun and entertaining, and small enough not to be overwhelmed in everyday life. The nature around lakeshore is beautiful and it is always a joy to watch squirrels.

Are there any aspects you would like to report ?

I love this place and it is extremely beautiful.

What I would like to add is that even before the exchange I knew American culture pretty well. A usual German student might find some American habits peculiar, which I cannot comment on because I find American culture and habits to be more natural than conventions in Germany.

If you do not like cold weather - do not choose UW Madison. At the time of writing it is -20 degrees Celsius and the forecast says that in a few days it will go down to -30 degrees Celsius. With the windchill it is even colder. I like cold weather, winter and snow - but at this point you really have to plan ahead so you get to classes on time and, upon arrival, not slither across the floor like a frozen popsicle.