

Report



Midwestern State University

In Wichita Falls Texas

Fall Semester 2013

Introduction

This report is intended to give an overview of my study-semester spent at Midwestern State University (MSU).

Preparation

In order to be accepted at MSU there were some preparations to take. In order to prove sufficient English skills the university requires a TOEFL-test with at least 79 points. The test is not cheap at a cost of around 120€ but is relatively easy to prepare for. I personally used the book Princeton Review and it served me well, but there are many different books about that topic. In order to not be pressed for time it is a good idea to take the test early because once the test was taken there is a 2 month hold to give it another try.

Besides a language test there is a vaccination against meningitis to be taken. That is a requirement for everyone who lives on campus at MSU. Our doctor at the UCB can perform the vaccination. The cost is about 18€.

Once everything is complete at MSU they let you choose where you want to stay. I personally chose the Sundance Court which is one of the newest housing-buildings on campus. There the students live with 1-3 housemates but everyone has their own room. The same can be said for Sundance Village. Most of the other possibilities are dorm rooms where you share one room with at least one more person.

In addition to the requirements from MSU there is the student visa to obtain from an embassy or consulate of the United States. Most of the preparation such as some questionnaire about my intentions and the date arrangement can be done online. At the embassy itself there are no electronics allowed and the personnel is pretty strict. They need everything prepared and send you home if you forgot something. I forgot to pay the SEVIS fee and was granted two hours to fix it. Luckily I managed to get it paid in time and was let in to the embassy. The full requirements can be found on the website of the embassy. Once it was my turn to talk to the immigration-officer it was only a formality and everything over in about 5 minutes.

Finally before I went to Texas I tried to choose the courses I wanted to take. By the advisors from Dillard College of Business Administration I was told that because there is a rather big pool of possible classes to choose from I should do that once I arrive there.

So I took a plane from Hamburg via London, New York and Dallas to Wichita Falls.

Arrival

As discussed with the International Office of MSU I arrived one week before classes started. They picked me and another international student up from the local airport and drove us to the campus where we were shown our accommodation. On the following day the international office even took us to the Walmart to help us get started in the new rooms and buy some food and other necessities.

Now I was able to talk to my advisor Nick Gipson about the classes to take. Basically a curriculum there does not only consist of classes connected to the main topic of study but gives the opportunity to gain insight into different fields. So a normal student would at some point during their studies have to take a class of history, arts, psychology or sociology. I really liked that possibility so I chose my classes mostly business-centric but added psychology because of my personal interests.

After I took care of some more formalities classes were about to start.

Classes

The classes at MSU are fundamentally different from classes at UCB. Instead of what I was used to from home the class-attendance was compulsory. In addition to that testing- and finals-scheme is disparate from what most professors in Birkenfeld do. Besides one of my classes, which was a hands-on-class, there were tests every other week. The professors gave homework to prepare for the next class and encouraged active participation in talking about the topics one should have read before. Sometimes there was a test. Sometimes there was not. This forced me to learn continually and stay on track with the content of the class instead of doing some work during the semester and then trying to learn everything at once as the finals approach.

The Grading works in a way that the smaller tests during the semester count into the final grade but at the end of the semester there is one final per class which has more weight than the other tests before. These finals all take place in finals week which is also the last week of the semester. The difficulty of the classes and tests was less than I am used to from UCB. This may be associated with the way they test. Mostly it is multiple-choice tests that did not seem too sneaky.

Overall I was very pleased with the professors and classes. Most of them were very

approachable if there were any questions or problems. In the day to day dealings they always seemed less formal than the professors I am used from Birkenfeld.

University

The Midwestern State University has about 5000 students of which a huge part are international students. Different from me they do not only spend on semester abroad but study in Wichita Falls regularly. For them it is quite surprising that someone only stays there for half a year.

To the students the sportive activities the University allows them to do is very important and a game of their teams is always a huge thing. For an important basketball or football match it is not uncommon that a few hundred people come to watch.

Besides the sports there are all kinds of clubs students can take a part in. There are professional clubs intended for people with a special interest in their field of study, all sorts of religious or special-interest groups. And of course there is the Greek system for people who would like to get involved in a fraternity or sorority. Many of the clubs welcome people who stay only for a short time. But the Greek system is not accustomed to such short periods of time.

I regularly met with the German Club which is led by a German who teaches at MSU. It was quite fun to meet new people there who have an interest in Germany and German culture.

The campus itself is a quite big place with all the different colleges, administration, housing and gymnasiums in one place. They have their own training grounds for various sports and a university-only gym that is free for students and pretty up to date being built a few years ago. Mostly the buildings are made from red bricks and sport a very consistent look.

Life besides University

The people there show the southern hospitality. It is very easy to get into contact with someone but not so easy to stay in contact and get past the usual small talk. At first it felt strange to me that someone would try and make smalltalk with me in the queue at the supermarket or at the

checkout of a gas station. It was quite a nice change from Germany where most of the people tend to themselves.

I spent most of the time with other international students mainly from Africa and the Caribbean. Just like at the UCB the student-housing is all on campus and not too far apart. So it is very easy to meet people on campus.

To get around town a car is necessary. Wichita Falls is quite spread out and to get from A to B can take you some time. There is a public bus system which students of MSU are allowed to ride for free but it does not get you everywhere. If I wanted to travel to a different city like Dallas for example I would have to take the bus or the plane. But to get to the bus-terminal and the airport there is no way through public transport.

Whenever I wanted to discover the surroundings of the university it became apparent to me that it is not a place for pedestrians. There are very few pedestrian lights and crossing a street without using an official way can be punished with a fine by the police.

My solution was borrowing a car from friends from university from time to time and coordinating my errands with people with cars so I could make it work. Completely without a car it would have been hard to get by.

Cities like Oklahoma City and Dallas are definitely worth a visit but what I can especially recommend are the Wichita Mountains and lake Lawtonka in Oklahoma. The Wichita Mountains are a wildlife reserve with perfect places to hike and enjoy the sight of some rare animals. Lake Lawtonka is a lake in the mountains which becomes quite warm in the summer and is perfect for a barbecue with friends and some time in the water.

Conclusion

The University left a very good impression on me and I have met a lot of interesting people there. If you like the benefits of the Environmental Campus like having everything in one place, getting to know the people around you and not being hidden in huge crowd of people the MSU is the right place for you. But if you are searching for more variety and city-life it is not the right place.

For me it was a good fit and I would recommend going there. All in all I enjoyed my stay in Wichita Falls very much.

Appendix:



Lake Lawtonka



Sundance Court - Student housing



Dillard College of Business Administration



Traditional bonfire at MSU



The Harding Administration Building



The Cheerleaders at basketball-arena



Wichita Mountains wildlife reserve