

## **Joint Study – Abschlussbericht**

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I studied Psychology at the University of Northern Iowa in the Fall Semester 2011. The semester started on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, and ended on December 16<sup>th</sup>. I arrived in Iowa on August 14<sup>th</sup>, one week early for the Orientation Week, organized by the International Office. This event was a good opportunity to meet other international students and explore the campus before classes started. The International Office recommend to fly into Waterloo Airport or Cedar Rapids Airport, where they can pick international students up. However it is cheaper to fly into Des Moines, the capital of Iowa, if you find a ride to Cedar Falls.

Besides the costs for flights (about 1000 Euros one way) and room and board (about 3700 U.S. Dollar for one semester in a double room), there are expenses for books, bedsheets (if you don't bring your own), and meals during breaks such as Labour Day weekend or Thanksgiving break. The dining centres will be closed during breaks. Students will not need to cook for themselves, meals are included in the room and board contract. The dining centres are open almost all day. I recommend asking teachers in advance for book titles and buying them online, since they are expensive at the University book store (about 100 U.S.Dollar per book). You can buy a set of sheets, blanket, pillow and towel from the International Office or purchase everything you need at Walmart or Target. A bus line goes directly from the campus to Walmart and is free for UNI students.

I guess the total expenditure to be around 5000 U.S. Dollar without travelling. While staying at UNI I opened a bank account at Veridian Credit Union, which was the least expensive bank at the moment and was right on campus.

UNI has several Computer labs located on campus, which can be used with your student ID and where students can print for free. Students can also use the Wellness and Recreation Centre (WRC) to work out for free, which consists of a lap pool, a leisure pool, racquet ball courts, basketball courts, tennis courts, indoor track field, a weight room, and many more.

As accommodation I recommend living on campus since it is hard to get around town without a car or a bike. I lived on-campus in an all-female dorm in a shared room. The rooms are furnished with a bed, desk, chair, dresser and closet. In some dorms they also have a sink in the rooms and/or air conditioning. The dorms have shared bathrooms and shared kitchens for each floor. You can borrow cooking utensils from the hall office. I recommend sharing a room with an American student. My roommate, a girl from Iowa, brought a TV, fridge, microwave, futon, and other household items with her, which I was allowed to use. I suggest signing up for the dorm Lawther, the girls dorm, which has the biggest and cleanest rooms. It is also one of the most quiet halls and very central on campus.

The International Office took care of registration for classes as well as getting our student ID's. The exchange students were divided into groups and had a student adviser who took us on a campus tour and to the departments where we could sign up for classes. They gave us a choice of classes the head of department thought we should enroll in, but not a full list of classes. I already informed myself of courses back home and had a printed copy with me when we registered, which was very helpful. Since regular students can already enroll for class in Spring, most of the classes were already full. I took four classes: Cognitive and Intellectual Assessment, Child and Adolescent Psychopathology, Memory and Language, and Psychology and Law. The amount of work was more than the amount of work I had at University of Klagenfurt. The final grade was not just dependent on the final exam, which counted only as 20% of the grade, but dependent on class participation, attendance, homework, and quizzes. Homework usually consisted of reading a book chapter and summarizing it or writing a short essay about it. Classes are not only once a week, but twice or three times a week. Keeping track of due dates and organizing homework and study time is important.

The contact to teachers is very good at UNI. Usually teachers stay after class for several minutes to talk to students and answer questions. Teachers usually respond to emails very quickly. In my experience the teachers try very hard to make sure every student understands the directions. I experienced a good contact to faculty and the Psychology department.

The contact between international students and residents was good. School work often required to work in groups, which made it easy to get to know many people. Students were very helpful most of the time, especially towards foreign students. University of Northern Iowa has a host family program, which I recommend to take advantage of. International

students can sign up and get an American host family. They don't live with the family, but get invited to dinner and do activities with their family whenever there is time to get a full cultural experience of the U.S.. The International Office also organizes events for the students and their host families such as Thanksgiving Dinner or Christmas Dinner.

Altogether, the International Office was very helpful from the beginning and took good care of all international students. They organized many events and activities such as the Orientation Week, dinners, and a trip to Chicago for the weekend.

The transportation system in Iowa or Cedar Falls is not very good. Cedar Falls and Waterloo have a bus system. However, buses come every hour and the bus service stops after 6pm. Other transportation systems through Iowa are not very good. Usually, every trip is made by car. Carpools are a good option to get around. To travel around in the U.S.A. you can either rent a car, take the train where it is possible, take the bus, or take the plane.

The most common destinations to go to from Cedar Falls are Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Minneapolis, and Chicago. It is also worth going to South Dakota to see Mount Rushmore, which is about 11 hours away from UNI. If you want to travel through the U.S. it is best to do so before or after the semester starts. Once you have your visa, you can travel to the U.S. 30 days in advance and stay 30 days after your visa expires.

Studying abroad at University of Northern Iowa and "becoming a Panther" with "purple and gold pride" was a good experience for me. The black panther is the school mascot and purple and gold the school colors. Students at University of Northern Iowa take school pride very seriously and I can say that my closet is now full with purple T-Shirts that weren't there before. It was interesting to see how different University is in America and to join and be part of big school or sport events such as Homecoming for football or basketball games.