

**Spending a Semester at**



**Final Report**

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# 1 Introduction

I can't remember a time in my life when I did not want to study in America. It took some time until I made the decision to apply for the Joint Study program in order to study abroad. I applied for two universities in the United States, one of them being University of West Florida and the other one being Oklahoma City University. When I finally got the approval that I can go to Pensacola, I was completely overwhelmed and totally looking forward to my semester abroad.

Now that it is over, I can say that studying at UWF was definitely one of the best experiences of my life. I got to know so many nice people and really enjoyed the American campus life. Moreover, I think that studying abroad really broadened my horizon. Before I went to America I was a bit scared since I didn't know what to expect. Sometimes I even doubted if I can do it, because going abroad means leaving behind your family and friends. Of course, there are times when you really miss everybody, but studying in America is such a great experience and time passes so quickly that you should never hesitate to do it. I never had any regrets. So go for it! You will have the time of your life 😊

## 2 Application Process & Preparation



First of all it is important to know that there are different possibilities to go abroad. There are various programs such as the Erasmus program or the Joint Study program. The following link gives you an overview of all the programs that are offered by the BIB: <http://www.uniklu.ac.at/bib/inhalt/593.htm>

I decided to apply for two American universities which are part of the Joint Study program. You can find a list of all the Joint Study partner universities here: <http://www.uni-klu.ac.at/bib/inhalt/814.htm>

Generally, it is good to apply for two different universities since it is not sure if you will get the approval for the university of your first choice. Therefore, I applied for University of West Florida in Pensacola as my first choice and for Oklahoma City University in Oklahoma City as my second choice.

When I finally received the approval that I can go to Pensacola, I was more than happy. However, the real work starts after that. You will have to fill out several forms such as the housing contract for UWF, health insurance forms and other things. Moreover, you will have to get a visa.

Although there is a lot of paperwork to do, there is no reason to become desperate since the BIB and your coordinator will be more than willing to help you. Moreover, you will receive help from the coordinators of your partner university. If you follow the different steps, there is nothing to be scared about.

However, there are two things that are very important. First of all, don't waste any time! Don't wait too long with sending your information to your partner university or applying for your visa. You might think there is still a lot of time, but actually time passes very quickly.

The second thing which is very important is not to book your flight before you actually have your visa. As long as you don't have it, things might still change and therefore it is not a good idea to book anything before you actually hold the visa in your hands.

### 3 Pensacola



First of all- Pensacola is not New York City, it is not Miami and it is not Las Vegas ☺ So don't be surprised to find out that Pensacola, with its population of about 50,000 people, might not differ a lot from your hometown in Austria. Nevertheless it is a very nice city to live and, moreover, its beaches are amazing. Even though Pensacola is just small, there are still a lot of things you can do.



Beautiful Pensacola Beach

**Pensacola Beach** is a very nice place and you might be able to lay in the sun or go swimming already by the beginning of March. There are also numerous nice restaurants and bars next to the beach where people just hang out and have fun. Speaking about having fun, it is also important to mention that Pensacola has a great nightlife. There are plenty of bars and going out is a lot of fun.



Very nice places to hang out in Pensacola- The Fish House and Seville Quarter

One of them is **The Fishhouse**. It is not only a restaurant, but there is also **The Deck Bar at Fishhouse**, where there are very good parties. The best day to go there is probably Wednesday, because they have special offers and there is always very good live music. Another nice place is **Seville Quarter**, which has 7 different rooms on 7 nights a week. The location is great and there is always good music. The parties in Pensacola are a lot of fun and it is possible to go out on almost every day of the week. Especially at the beginning, this is very exciting. However, it is important to mention that even though it is a lot of fun, one should keep in mind that the purpose of an exchange semester is actually *studying* abroad. So have fun, but don't forget about your duties as a student 😊

Moreover, Pensacola has some nice restaurants. I can really recommend **McGuire's Irish Pub** in Downtown Pensacola, not only because they have delicious food at a reasonable price, but also because the location itself is awesome.

In the 1970's, the owner of the bar tacked her first tip, one dollar, to the bar. Later, guests started doing the same and with time, this became tradition. Today there are more than \$550,000 one dollar bills hanging from the ceiling of McGuire's. Consequently, McGuire's is not only a good choice if you want to eat something, but it is also nice just to walk through the pub and take a look around.



McGuire's Irish Pub

Another nice place in Pensacola is **Ozone Pizza Pub**. The pizza there is delicious and on Mondays, they always have special offers and you can get a huge pizza for very little money.

In conclusion it can be said that Pensacola is actually a very nice city which that you a lot of opportunities. You can spend time on the beach, you have a lot of nice restaurants and you can really enjoy the nightlife there. The locations I mentioned above are only a few out of several nice places. However, I should mention that most of the places are not very close to the campus. Going Downtown takes you approximately 15 minutes with car or cab and if you want to go to the beach, it will be about 30 minutes. Therefore, it's always good to have friends with cars 😊

## 4 UWF

### 4.1 Housing



There are different opportunities for students who want to live on campus of UWF. There are the Traditional Residence Halls, Suite Style Residence Halls, Southside Village Residence Halls and the apartments in the two different villages, Village East and Village West. The different housing opportunities vary in cost, with the halls being cheaper than the apartments in the villages.



Village East

I applied for housing in a 4-bedroom-apartment in Village East. The apartment had four separate bedrooms, two bathrooms and a shared kitchen and living room area. I can really recommend living in Village East since many of the International Students are living there and so one gets to know people very quickly. Even though the villages are a bit further away from campus than the halls, it is only a ten-minute walk to the main campus area. Moreover, there is a trolley leaving from the villages to the main campus about every 15 minutes, which makes it very easy to go to the different buildings.



My room in Village East

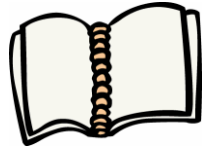


The kitchen area

Generally, the apartments in Village East are quite nice and if people work together with their roommates, the place will also be clean. However, one might experience some unforeseeable occurrences. Some people can be quite messy and of course it is not a good thing to live with people who never clean up and always leave behind a complete a mess. If that's the case, don't be afraid of asking for an apartment change. I have been in the same situation and at first I was a bit afraid of asking for another place.

However, it was not a big deal at all. I just talked to one of the Resident Assistants (RA's), explained my problem and could move to another apartment within 3 days. So if you ever experience problems with your roommates or you are just not satisfied with your apartment, don't hesitate to ask for an apartment change. The RA's will be more than willing to help you.

## **4.2 Classes**



Before I went to America people always told me how easy the classes at American universities are and that you don't really have to study a lot. I have to disagree on that. Some of the classes may be a bit easier than classes in Austria content wise. However, classes at UWF are quite demanding as there are quizzes almost every week and a lot of assignments. Back home, I didn't really have a lot of work during the semester. The only time that was very busy, were the last weeks and the final exams. This is completely different in the USA. Teachers want you to contribute to the class in every session. The lessons are most of the time quite interactive and there are lots of discussions.

Therefore, be aware of the fact that studying abroad is not easier than studying in Austria. Some of the quizzes might not be as difficult as at home, but you will have to work a lot though. Almost all of the classes have a points system. Students gain points through exams, assignments and participation. It's very important to take the classes seriously, because if you don't gain enough points already at the beginning of the semester, you might not be able to catch up on them later.

As an exchange student you have to take 12 hours of classes per semester. At UWF, most of the classes are 3 hours. Therefore, you will probably have to take 4 different classes. At the beginning of the semester I was quite euphoric and thought I should try to do 5 classes. I enrolled for all of them, but dropped one of them within the first weeks. I am not saying that taking more classes is impossible, but I would recommend not to take more classes than you have to take because all of the classes are really time-consuming.

Still, it is a good thing to sign up for 5 or 6 classes and check them within the first week. Thus, you will be able to choose between classes and drop the ones you don't like. Moreover, make sure you talk to the director of studies of your department before you leave your home university. They might discuss your choice of classes with you and tell you if you can get full credit for each of the classes. It's always good to know that in advance in order to prevent unpleasant surprises when you come back 😊

### **I took the following classes at UWF:**

- 1) Newspaper Reporting (3 hours)
- 2) Principles of Mass Communication (3 hours)
- 3) Writing for Film-Television-Radio (3 hours)
- 4) Critical Issues on the American Education System (Online Class, 3 hours)

**My schedule looked like this:**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
<b>11:30- 12:45</b> Newspaper Reporting	<b>01:00- 02:15</b> Principles of Mass Communication	<b>11:30- 12:45</b> Newspaper Reporting	<b>01:00- 02:15</b> Principles of Mass Communication
<b>BREAK</b>		<b>BREAK</b>	
<b>4:00-5:15 PM</b> Writing for Film- Television-Radio		<b>4:00-5:15 PM</b> Writing for Film- Television-Radio	

My online class does not appear on my schedule since these classes only take place online. However, this does not mean that online classes are not as time-consuming as other classes. Actually, my online class was pretty hard. One has to spend several hours per week online, participate in class discussions, do several assignments and a lot of reading. Nevertheless, online classes are a good thing because you can make your own hours.

Talking about classes, it is also important to mention that you will have to buy a lot of books at the beginning of the semester. You can get them at the UWF Bookstore. I was really shocked when I saw how expensive the books are there. One has the possibility to buy the books used or to rent them, which is definitely cheaper than buying a new edition. However, you may also buy your books online. I talked to many students who did that and I also ordered some of my books through amazon.com, because they were considerably cheaper!

If you buy your books at the UWF Bookstore, you can resell them by the end of the semester and might get half of the money you paid back. The problem is that if they don't use the same textbooks the following semester, you might get no money at all. In my case, I paid about 200 € for my books and got back 35 € when I resold them at the end of the semester. Not really a good deal... 😊



### **4.3 Food**

As you might know, American food is monotonous. If you like fast food, you will definitely love the "American cuisine". If you are used to eat healthy, you might be a bit desperate from time to time. I have to say that I really like eating and I also enjoy fast food from time to time. However, one literally gets "fed up" with burgers, fries and pancakes after some time. Therefore, I was grateful to have my own kitchen where I could prepare my meals.

It is also very nice to cook together with your roommates or other International Students. We cooked a lot together and had all types of international food, from Spanish tortillas to French quiche 😊 So if you have your own kitchen, cooking is not a problem. If you live in one of the halls, you might get a meal plan. With this plan, you can go to the cafeteria everyday.

I have to say that UWF offers some very nice places where people can eat on campus. You can find an overview of the different places here: [http://uwf.edu/graduate/documents/Campus\\_Dining\\_Venues\\_&\\_Hours.pdf](http://uwf.edu/graduate/documents/Campus_Dining_Venues_&_Hours.pdf)

## 5 Travelling



When spending a semester in America, travelling is a very good possibility to spend your leisure time. Domestic flights are most of the time very cheap and you can also go by car. When I spent my semester abroad in Florida, my friends and me rented cars all the time and went to many different places such as Orlando, New Orleans, Jacksonville, Tampa, St.Petersburg, Daytona Beach or St.Augustine. During Spring Break I took a flight to Miami and spent 10 days exploring Miami, the Everglades and the Miami Keys. It was an amazing experience and I can really recommend to save some money for travelling beforehand 😊



Our "crew" at Universal in Orlando



At a NASCAR Race in Daytona Beach



Holding an alligator in the Everglades



Miami Beach



Driving our car on the beach in Daytona



## 6 Statement of costs

	Amount
VISA Handling Fee	115 €
SEVIS FEE for VISA	140 €
Photo for VISA	15 €
Insurance	350 €
International Driving License	25 €
Long Distance Flight (Munich-Atlanta-Pensacola and back)	740 €
Hotel costs (for stays in Pensacola before moving on campus/after moving out)	240 €
Housing on Campus (Village East, 4-room-apartment, price per person per semester)	2000 €
University Books	210 €
Costs of Living (Food etc.)	approx. 2000 € (500 €/month)
Travel Costs (only approximate costs)	approx. 2500 €
<b>SUBTOTAL (expenses)</b>	<b>approx. 8335 €</b>
Joint Study Scholarship	1420 €
Dr. Josef Martinz Stipendium	500 €
Zuschuss des Kärntner Landesjugendreferats	500 €
Book Resell	35 €
<b>Actual Costs</b>	<b>approx. 5880 €</b>

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me:



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