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Degree Program at TAU: MBA

Host University: McCombs School of Business, The University of Texas at Austin

Exchange term: Fall 2019

Exchange Experience

About the Host University:

The campus is located at the central of the city, between the 18th street and the 32nd street. The campus itself is pretty big – there are approximately 50 thousand students who study at the university. The university have been founded at 1883 and therefore there are a lot of old beautiful buildings around the campus.

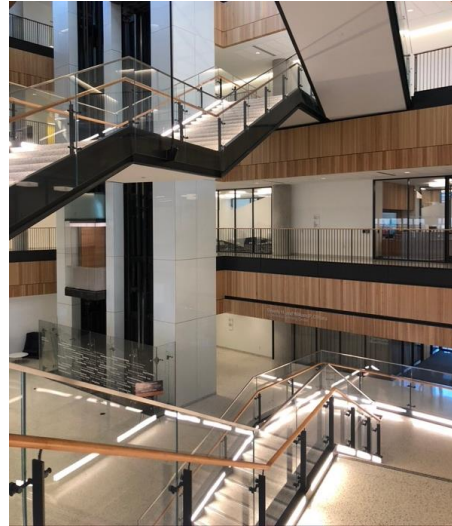
The atmosphere at the campus is very young, and there are a lot of activities that you can do, almost at any time. For example, there is a big gym, pools, fast food restaurants, and almost everything you need on campus.

The McCombs Business School has two buildings: the old one – which is for the undergraduate students, and the new one, for MBA and Master Programs' students. The new building is located at the south side of the university.

As an exchange students at McCombs, you are considered as a regular second year student. That means that you can take almost every class you want, take part at almost every activity that the program offers, both academic and social activities.

The school treats the exchange students very well, and they are helping integrating them with the other students of the program. There are a lot of social activities that can help you get to know the students as of the first week.

The building of the MBA Business School:



Courses and professors:

As mentioned, At McCombs, you can take almost every course you want. They offer various courses each semester, some of them are offered each semester, and some of them are not.

I took the following courses:

1. Negotiations – I took the negotiations class with Professor Murphy. I really liked the course, as it was very practical. Every week we participated in a negotiation session, with different groups and case scenarios.
2. Design Thinking – With Professors Walls. It's a course about business innovation and how you should develop and design a new product. The course involves a lot of academic knowledge that the professor shares, and also practical work that you do in groups.
3. Texas Venture Labs Practicum – the course is divided into two sections:
 - Classes every week with the head of the Texas Venture Labs – Professor Butler, where he hosts once a week a guest lecturer;
 - Group work, with a mentor, and a startup company that we need to advise to.

The course is practical, and it requires putting some extra effort.

Accommodation:

There are various options, depends on your budget. You have plenty of facilities at the university where most of the undergrads live. Those are shared apartments with private rooms. The problem for me was to find a furnished apartment, for the specific dates that I intended to be at. Furnished apartments can be found at complexes around the city, but they are relatively expensive.

I eventually rented an apartment at the north part of the university (38th st.), and I found it through 'Zillow app'.

Another option could be taking an Airbnb for the entire stay. Some of my friends did it and it was fine.

There were students that have rented their apartments for a longer period than they planned to – because they couldn't find an apartment, and were sure that they'll find someone else that will take the contract from them. I really don't recommend doing so! Most of them haven't found anyone who was willing to take their contract, and they had to pay for an extra month or two. Most of the exchange students that come to UT, usually come for the Fall semester, so there are not a lot of students that willing to rent an apartment at the beginning of January, when you'll probably leave Austin.

Transportation:

As a UT student, you get free rides in the buses across the city. If you live in an area where you can take the bus to the university – that's great and will save you a lot of money, so you should also consider it in your decision on where to live.

In the mornings, the buses come every few minutes. Other than that, you can use also Uber or Lyft or a rented scooter.

If you want to travel, you can rent a car through the popular agencies, or use 'Turo app'. There are both good and I had good experience with them.

Insurance and Health Services:

You have to pay for the mandatory insurance of the university (approximately 1300\$). I also did a traveler insurance because I wanted to go abroad, and you have to do the Israeli traveler insurance from the day you leave Israel, if you want to go abroad.

Living expenses:

That depends on the option you choose: you can choose living with partners and then it will be cheaper, or live by yourself.

Austin itself is not expensive as Manhattan, but is also not cheap. Again, it depends on how you choose to live.

Food:

On campus and around it, there are a lot of fast food restaurants and some local restaurants that will be nice and cheap options for lunch.

The food scene in Austin is really unique. You should try everything that the city has to offer:

- First the Barbeque – Almost in every corner of the city there is a barbeque. You should go to the known places: Terry Black’s, Micklethwait, etc. and you HAVE to try Franklin Barbeque. It’s considered to be the best in Austin, and one of the best in the US! ***Just note that you will probably have to wait around 4 hours to get in (Google it and you’ll see), but it is worth it (it’s not that bad as it sounds, you’ll probably go with few friends and that’s fun!).
- Second, because of the large amount of Mexican population in Austin, there are a lot of great Mexican restaurants (and especially tacos) in Austin.
- Also there are a lot of food trucks in Austin, also at the university. They offer all kinds of food, and it’s nice to try.
- Other than that, there are so many other restaurants, and all kinds of food (even Hummus).

Night life

Austin is considered to be a great night life city, as it has everything. The main areas are:

- East Sixth Street – Sixth Street itself is located downtown of the city, and considered to be the nightlife street. Between Thursday and Sunday, they block the street, and cars are not allowed to enter. On Friday’s and Saturday’s, it gets really crowded over there and there are a lot of people that are going out (especially undergrads) to the tens of bars in the street.
- West Sixth Street – The west side of the street has also a lot of bars, and the people that usually going out there are older than the undergrads. When you’ll go with your friends from the MBA program, it will probably be to this side of the city. The bars there are really nice.
- Rainey Street – Another section in the city, at the end of the downtown area, near the Highway. It’s a very unique street that (also) has a lot of bars. The bars there are built as kind of townhouses, and has a big backyard. It’s great to go there on Sundays at noon.

Tips:

- Austin is a unique city. The main saying of the city is “keep Austin weird”. There are almost no large fashion chains at the city center, and they are trying to keep the city as it was in the last decades. Try to get to know the city, and the

culture. The local people of the city are nice and you can learn a lot of the city and the culture, only from a small chat with a local person.

- Read about the city before, and see if it's what you are looking for. Austin is not Manhattan. It's also different from Tel Aviv. The city is big, and has different tempo than other big cities. At first, it's kind of strange, but when you get used to live in the city, it's just feels like home.
- Football – You should buy the big tickets and go to the football games. The Texas Longhorns is the football team of the university. It's a big part of the culture there, and the football games are such a great experience, even if you don't like sport. Part of being in Austin, is loving the Texas Longhorns (Hook'em!).
- Go to the ACL Music festival, and buy the tickets ahead with your future exchange program friends. Debbie (the Exchange Program Coordinator) will introduce you all a month before the arrival time.

General experience:

Doing the semester abroad was one of the best experiences of my life. You get to know so many friends from all around the world, and study in a great full-time MBA program where you can learn a lot. Living in Austin is also a great experience. The city is just amazing, and soon enough it will feel like home.

My best advice to you is **just to do it**. You won't regret it, I promise you. **I literally had the time of my life over there!**

Here are some photos:



