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Degree Program at TAU: MBA

Host University: The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania

Exchange Term: Spring 2020 (full semester)

Exchange Experience

About the Country and City

The United States is known as the land of infinite opportunities and resides between Mexico and Canada. Wharton is located in the Philadelphia, the capital of the state of Pennsylvania. For a brief time in history Philadelphia was actually also the capital of the US! Therefore, many interesting events in the history of the foundation of the US took place there, like the signing of The Declaration of Independence and more. You can visit the different places, which are now museums, to learn more about the history of the US (all within walking distance of where you will most likely live in the city).

About the Host University

The campus is located in the West side of the city and has very beautiful architecture. The University of Pennsylvania's campus is one of the first campuses (maybe the first) in the US! Wharton is known as the first business school and many great leaders have studied there (I'll let you look them up for yourself).

Most activities after school (there are many) happen in Center City, where most of the bars and theaters are located, and not near the campus.

The Wharton MBA program has many extra-curricular activities, including:

- Clubs (hobbies, industry specific, culture related, sports and more); For instance, I chose to be part of these clubs:
 - o Volleyball club - We practiced once a week and had a match once a week in which we eventually won the all-university competition.
 - o Food club – very recommended. During the semester they host a few dinners in fancy restaurants (at extra cost) where you enjoy good food and meet new people from the huge club. There are also a few private dinners you can choose from hosted by members that volunteered to host (you can too).

- Entrepreneurship club – mostly lectures and a weekly newsletter with the events and programs you may be interested in.
- Tech club – similar to the entrepreneurship club and also publish a weekly newsletter with helpful information. Also organize interesting tours to NYC and SF to see different companies (startups mostly)
- Snowboarding and Ski club – everyone almost joins to take part in the Wharton ski trip that takes place a month after the semester starts. It is very expensive since it's in Colorado at an expensive resort, however it's definitely a way to get to know everyone quickly. I recommend you look into it before, so you don't miss the chance to sign up if interested.
- I didn't sign up to the Israeli club or the JAMBA (Jewish Association of MBAs) club, however I was invited to their events and joined the delegation to AIPAC they organized (very recommended)

**All these clubs cost money (around 25-50 USD) in addition to 25 USD you pay to the Wharton Association.

- Lunch and Learns - these are lectures on a specific topic hosted in one of the classes during lunch by one of the clubs. The hosting club usually provides lunch for all the attendees and there are usually a few different lunch and learns to choose from at the same time.
- In addition, there are different parties hosted by the clubs every week (expensive but some are worth it – like the Brazilian party).
- Prof lunch/dinner – it is also common for professors to open up slots for you to join them for lunch or dinner (usually in small groups of students)- very recommended.

Courses and professors

I was very satisfied with the courses I choose. I choose courses mostly related to entrepreneurship and VC, but also two other courses that were much recommended : Influence and Applied Marketing Probabilities. There is a spreadsheet with all the courses and the grade the teaching professor received in the post course survey as well as the overall satisfaction with that course by students of every year.

- Applied Marketing Probabilities: an interesting approach to performing customer behavior based analysis of a product or a market. It's a very, very demanding course, but professor Fader is world renowned in his field and an overall amazing lecturer.
- Entrepreneurship 801 – A course by Ethan Mollick that teaches the fundamentals of developing an idea to a startup through hands-on experience of researching and later on pitching.
- Entrepreneurship 802 – A course by Ethan Mollick as well, that contains a few simulations of running a startup (we only got to experience the main one due to the COVID crisis)

- VC Management – taught by Prof Sammut who is a great lecturer in my opinion. The course covers the fundamentals of what you need to know about VCs, both from the entrepreneur's perspective and from the VC's.
- Influence: A very interesting course that requires a lot of reading at home every week, but discusses different influence and power techniques and dilemmas that arise through those cases.

Accommodation

As an MBA coming for only one semester I'm not quite sure you have a dorms option, however I wouldn't recommend it. The only students in dorms are the undergrads, whereas the graduate students all live in Center city.

I recommend living somewhere around Rittenhouse Square since most of the afterschool events take place in that area. There are also after-school studying rooms located in a building rented to the university on 2401 Walnut, so I recommend finding a place somewhere between there and Rittenhouse.

I actually found a place on Broad and Locust which is close enough to Rittenhouse but a bit of a long walk to the university campus.

Transportation

- The campus is easy to get to from Center City: either with the 21 bus on Walnut or by subway. You need to get what's called a SEPTA card – like a RAVKAV.
- Within Center City everything is walking distance.
- Getting to Philly: you can either fly directly to Philly or fly to NYC and take a bus or a train. The train is 1:15hr and the bus is 2:15hr. (55 usd, 10 usd respectively)

Insurance and Health Services

The university requires you to get American insurance and does not accept any travel insurance – I really tried. If you are not an American, then you should try ISO (international student insurance) which is probably the cheapest satisfying insurance you'll find (I had a problem since I'm American and they don't accept Americans in the international insurance). If you don't do that, the university will force you to take their insurance which is more expensive and comes out to 2,300 USD. In addition, you have to pay for clinic service at the school (even if you don't use them) - 300 dollars.

However, this is all a very small price to pay once you understand how much each student in the regular program is paying and considering you are getting the same experience (at least for that semester).

Living expenses

Living in Center City and near Rittenhouse Square specifically is the most expensive choice you can make (but recommended):

A two bedroom (for two roommates) apartment would go for 2,500 USD a month and a 1 bedroom for around 1,800 USD.

Besides that, you are paying for restaurants and bars, school trips, vacations, transportation (Uber), and more.

I would say be prepared to spend around 3,000 USD a month living largely.

Food

Philly has great restaurants, especially in Center City. I can recommend a few I liked:

- Picnah steak house (as much as you can eat - like Papagaio in Israel but cheaper)
- El Vez (great Mexican)
- Kinme (sushi place)
- Dizengoff (Hummus)

Night life

There are definitely some good bars, but you'll probably go to where the other students go. For instance, every Thursday there is a tradition and an event at a place called the Pub (next to the 2401 Walnut study building) where usually you get unlimited beer and some sort of student show. Parties at the clubs are on every weekend.

Tips

I enjoyed going to the theater which was across the street from my apartment (the Kimmel center). I discovered that you can arrive two hours before any show (including all Broadway shows that come to town) and get a very discounted ticket and the best seats in the house!

I also enjoyed ice skating and went several times. There is a Winterfest in the Bluecross ice rink I recommend checking out if you're there during the winter. There is another ice rink at Rotchester near city hall – use Groupon for discounts at both.

Check out the liberty bell and other national monuments and museums. The city is amazing and full of history and museums. Also be sure to check out the Rocky steps!

Check out Economy Car rentals for renting a car to get out of the city for a good price!

General experience

For me this was the experience of a lifetime, even though it was cut short due to the COVID19 crisis which caused us to study the second half of the semester from home.

Try to make the most of your experience by making an effort to try and learn new things. For instance, I got accepted to the VIP program which you can read about and the FedTech program.

An MBA in the US is very different than the MBA program in Israel and is a full time commitment – try to take as much of it in as possible. Remember that you will probably always feel some “fomo” since there are so many different things going on every day, all the time, and you always have to make a choice of missing something else.

Enjoy!











