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Degree Program at TAU: MBA

Host University: University of Pennsylvania

Exchange term: Spring 2020 – 4 months

Exchange Experience

The Student Exchange Program was one of the best experiences I had during my MBA. Philadelphia is a great city to live in, there is a variety of courses offered by the University of Pennsylvania, alongside many extracurricular activities. Studying in a full time MBA is also different than the program at TAU. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 my experience was cut short, however the university allowed for exchange student to accomplish their studies online.

About the country and city

Philadelphia offers an interesting combination between old and new, history and modern life. On the one hand, almost in every corner of the city there is an historic monument: from the Liberty Bell, to the house of the Declaration of Independence, to old churches and more. On the other hand, there are plenty of pubs, restaurants, new museums, new towers that accommodate many of Wharton students and more. The weather during my stay was great, allowing get to know the city by walking its streets.

About the Host University

The University of Pennsylvania is one of the oldest schools in the US and the Wharton school of management has one of the best MBA programs in the country. Wharton students are usually full-time students, and so aside from the time they invest in the classes they spend most of their time in extracurricular activities. There are many students' clubs to which you can join, lunches with industry leaders, lunches with professors, pub nights and more. Most of the student's communication is via 'Slack' and I recommend joining it so you can find information about everything that is happening in Wharton. Many of the activities are closed for students' clubs so I recommend joining the clubs that are the most interesting to you in the beginning of your experience.

Courses and professors

Wharton offers a variety of courses in various fields. Although the school is known for its finance and economic classes, I found various classes in sustainability and social responsibility. 1 CU is usually equivalent to 2 YAS though it might change depending on class's schedule. The classes I took:

- Business, Social Responsibility, and the Environment, Prof. Eric Orts (0.5 CU) – very interesting class about social responsibility. Most of the lessons were formed as discussions and almost everyone in class were highly engaged. We also had 3 guest lecturers. We had to write one essay about personal experience and a group presentation. Altogether the class was also easy, and I highly recommend it.
- Leading Diversity in Organizations, Professor Stephanie J. Creary (0.5 CU) – I loved this class. Prof. Creary is very engaging and the idea behind diversity and inclusion strategies is one I believe every manager should understand. Comparing to other classes it required a lot of work – reading for every class and commenting on class's website, one group essay and one group presentation. However, all readings/podcasts were relevant for class's discussions. During class we had two guest lecturers and an opportunity to meet the CEO of diversity Inc. for a small group discussion.
- Environmental Management, Law and Policy, Professor Michael P. Vandenberg (1 CU) – this is by far the hardest class I took at Wharton, though it was fascinating. We discussed laws about waste management and disposal, clean air and water, the Paris agreement and private governance. Mid semester and due to Covid-19 we moved for online learning, which made it harder to follow the class's content, but the professor also changed parts of the syllabus to address this change. Class requirements were: an essay, a multiple-choice questions midterm and a final exam. Professor Vandenberg was a visiting professor from Vanderbilt University and the class is usually led by a different professor.
- Understanding Careers and Executive Labor Markets, Professor Matthew Bidwell (0.5 CU) – Unfortunately I took this class online because of Covid – 19. Professor Bidwell still managed to keep it interesting and engaging, and I am sure that if I were in class it would have been even better. The class is very practical and started with career anchors assessment. For the final paper we had to interview 5 managers that are 20 years older than us, and are in relevant positions for our personal interests, and ask them questions about their career. My favorite part about this class is that it was very practical and

the main idea behind the essay was to help each one of us to be more prepared for our individual careers.

- Introduction to Brain Science for Business, Professor Michael Platt (0.5 CU) –I wouldn't recommend this class unless you are interested in the science of brain science. As a non-native English speaker, it was hard to understand the material, and the business implications, which are what I hoped to learn, were only a minor part of the class.

Accommodation

Most MBA students live in center city. I highly recommend living in that area as everything after school hours is happening there. I lived in a brownstone with another exchange student, however there are also new housing towers in the area and many of Wharton students rent an apartment in one of them. They are more expensive and often require a six-month lease. Renting a furnished apartment makes it also more expensive.

I recommend using the off-campus housing website to look for housing options and opportunities. You might find there students who are looking for a lease take-over in which case rental might be cheaper and for shorter term.

Visa

Wharton allows you to choose between J1 Visa and F1 visa. You should look at the website to see what fits your needs first. The process was slow, and I recommend filling all the paperwork as soon as you can.

Transportation

Public transportation in Philadelphia costs 2-2.5 \$ for a ride. You can buy a SEPTA card at the Penn Book Store on campus and charge it with money. It works much like Rav-Kav. Both Uber and Lift are great options for students who are looking for a faster ride. Personally, most of the time I preferred to walk.

Insurance and Health Services

At the university website you can find a list of acceptable health insurances, aside for the one that the university offers. However, if you need to use the university services even once, they will charge you more than 300 \$.

The university also has immunizations requirements and I recommend making sure you have everything they ask for. I had to pay the 300\$ to do a TB test because they didn't allow to do the test at any other place.

Living expenses

My rent was 1,050\$ a month which was cheaper than the average.

Living expenses were around 2,900 including going out in the city, CrossFit membership, shopping, school clubs' activities and traveling in NY (without accommodations).

Food

I mostly cooked at home but there are many restaurants in the city and near the university, so if you don't like to cook you won't have a problem. In addition, almost every day around 13:20 different students-groups bring food from students' lunches to the MBA café and if you are looking for a free food this is the place to go. If you do cook there are plenty of supermarkets around center city, the largest one is Trader's Joe.

Tips

1. Sign for 'Slack' as soon as you can to know about all extracurricular activities.
2. Sign for more classes than you need, so if one of your classes is not interesting enough you can drop it (I dropped a class but had to look for a replacement very late since many of the classes require first class attendance).
3. Reach to the Israeli students at Wharton to find some familiar faces at the beginning of the year.
4. Have fun!