

My Semester Abroad at UVM (Fall 2018)

Overall, I have to say I spent a wonderful semester at UVM, have gotten to know many great people and took some of the most interesting and enriching classes of my academic studies.

Arrival

We were well prepared to get through the visa process. The amazingly well-organized International Office at UVM got us a checklist and, apart from the fact that we as European citizens are not used to the effort of obtaining a visa, the trip to the embassy in Munich went really well.

Concerning the actual arrival at UVM, it generally went smoothly. The only slightly annoying thing was that the check-in day and time in the university residence was so specific that I had to book a more complicated flight to arrive at that particular time. However, some students I met just booked a hostel for a night or two to arrive in advance.

Accommodation

The type of accommodation depends on which residence you are assigned. Most of the international students who stayed for just one semester lived in a quite large one, with several floors (divided by gender), a large common room and a kitchen. You can use the kitchen whenever you want, but it is not equipped with any dishes or kitchenware, so you would need to bring or buy some - it does provide a big fridge, microwave, oven, stove etc., though.

We were about 40 people on one floor, with a shared bathroom for all of us. Most were having one, some two roommates. On each floor, you will have a residential adviser who is be responsible for you. For me, it was really interesting to be able to talk to someone who has been living on campus for a while.

Overall, I would say that my residence hall was not incredible in terms of looks but fine for the few months I stayed there, especially because I got along really well with my

roommate. It was also really close to the cafeteria, the gym/sport complex and the bus stop, which was quite convenient.



Classes

Overall, I am very happy with the classes I chose before arriving. I chose classes exclusively from my area of studies, namely linguistics and English, but there is the possibility to choose from a wide variety of seminars. The teaching style is very different to a German university, as the grades do not depend on just one final exam or term paper, but rather a continuous assessment of grades and therefore workload, in form of reading assignments and quizzes, tests, homework and midterms. One thing that was different from the University of Augsburg, is that I 'only' had four classes, which is the amount recommended. However, those classes took place twice or three times a week. This means that the work is a lot more continuous and in-depth than we are used to.

Generally, I would say that the relationship between the teacher and the student is more personal and all teachers were happy to help with whatever question or request you had. I would say that it is even a little expected of you to go and see the teacher after class or in office hours and to get involved.

Social Contacts

I have to admit that most of my social contacts were other international students, as we met through the orientation week before classes began (which was really helpful

and fun). Fortunately though, I had a non-German roommate as well as a solid group of friends who came from different national backgrounds, so I ended up speaking English most of the time. After some time, I also got to know a few American students, which I think was quite important as well. Before arriving, we could choose if we wanted a local tandem-partner - which I did – so between her and my friends' partners, there were already a few Americans I knew. Most classes further require group work or at least in-class communication and discussion, which helped with meeting people.

Daily Life on Campus

Except for maybe the first few weeks, I was rather busy between classes, homework and the Salsa Team, which I had joined. The crazy thing is that the campus always offers more things to do! As I already mentioned, there is a gym available for free as well as different fitness classes and groups. There are also teams and clubs that ask for a little more commitment, which I would nevertheless highly recommend joining. Apart from that, there were regular campus parties, like on Halloween or a summer ending party, trips and activities from the International Office, a lot of activities offered by the outing club, and also many facilities you could use, like the wellness center or mental health counselling. Initially, all of this was very new to us, but in the end, it is very easy to participate in many things and take advantage of the opportunities.



Regarding the food, you will have to pay for your meal plan, but you will be able to eat as often and as much in the dining halls as you want. The food really depends on the day and time you go to eat (the good stuff is generally gone pretty early at night). Your meal plan also gives you 100\$ to use in the other campus cafeterias and shops. One thing I had to get used to was the fact that eating is not as much of a socially important thing to do as here.

Some Final Thoughts

- Vermont winters are tough: the fall semester starts in mid-August and ends mid-December, but get ready for snow and temperatures below zero in November.



- Plan your vacations and trips ahead of time. You will have to pay extra for staying at the residence hall during the term breaks, so you should plan accordingly. Burlington offers many relatively close trip destinations: Boston, New York and Montreal, for example. Even within Vermont, it is totally worth planning a day or weekend trip.

- Burlington is a lovely city, but not that big, so you will find your way around the city quickly enough and it is worth just walking around a bit.

- UVM and all of the Burlington/Vermont area is just a dream if you are into sports and/or

nature, which is just breathtaking.

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