

Fall 2016

Oklahoma State University



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A Semester Abroad at Oklahoma State University

Me and Pistol Pete

Hey guys! I was lucky to study for one semester at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, OK during the Fall Semester of 2016. I had a very great time and I would like to talk about some points that you have to consider while studying in the States and in Oklahoma. I bleed orange and I am a true Oklahoma State Cowgirl! Go Pokes!

Oklahoma

Oklahoma! Where is Oklahoma? You might have asked yourself that question. Oklahoma is a mid-western state in the United States. So, there are Cowboys? Yes, there are! But don't be afraid! Only a very small percentage of the student population dresses like that. However, if you go out to the right club, you might find yourself two-stepping all night long. Oklahoma State University is located in the north-central region of Oklahoma.



Oklahoma State

Oklahoma State University is a lot bigger than the Hochschule Augsburg. There are approximately 20,000 students on the Stillwater Campus. You'll have a great college experience with many opportunities! In Stillwater, there are approximately 46,000 people living there. This means, almost half of the residents are students!



There are many more opportunities and activities to do at the University. The students consider the campus and the city of Stillwater as their new home. Barely anybody goes home during the semester. Oklahoma State offers hundreds of student organizations and clubs you can be involved with. This is a great opportunity to get to know domestic students and to get to know the American culture. You'll experience a culture of "Freebees and Goodies". Just walk around Campus and you'll find a stand that hands out free T-Shirts, Pizza or Donuts. It never gets boring. The Student Union Activity Board organizes many events and activities throughout the semester for students to have fun and enjoy their selves and broaden their horizon.

Studying in the United States is a totally different experience compared to the German university system. The University wants you to be involved in you classes. Most times attendance is mandatory and the professor gives out homework almost every week. The workload during the semester is more than at a German University. However, you barely have to study for any exams since you already did the homework. Especially the final exams won't be anything to worry about since you've been involved all semester long. The workload is spread all around the semester, but never gets too intense. The class size will be a lot smaller than at your German university and the professors are here to help. If you have any problems understanding or getting your homework done, they'd love to get to know you and help. Since Oklahoma State is a "State" University and has excellent academic programs, a degree from OkState is very valuable and gives a good impression when applying for a job.



Food & Health

Since the US is the mother nation of Fast Food you'll have an amazing food experience. Forget McDonalds or Burger King, you'll actually get tasty and higher quality Fast Food. You'll be surprised! However, all that Fast Food obviously has to be worked off. Oklahoma State offers a great variety of "intramural-sports" and sports clubs that are free to join. You can form your own team and play in an intracollegiate league against other students. If that is not enough, there's always the Colvin. The Colvin is a huge gym that offers weight lifting, a climbing wall, racket ball, basketball/volleyball court, indoor soccer court, outdoor/indoor pool, and many more things. And it's all for free! You definitely have to check that out!

Course Selection

A few months before you'll start your semester at OkState, an academic advisor will contact you via e-mail and will ask you to do your course selection. Since Oklahoma State is a lot bigger than the Hochschule Augsburg, you are able to choose between a few hundreds of courses and you can choose what you are really interested in. Most times, your courses will require "prerequisites". Meaning, that you have to have passed certain lower level courses to be able to enroll. However, just contact your academic advisor and he will give you an override so that you'll be able to enroll without having to show the prerequisites.

Weather

Since I am a fan of hot weather, I absolutely loved the Oklahoman climate. In the summer easily gets to 40 °C. If you are lucky it'll stay hot until mid-October and it'll be warm until mid-November. But be aware! Sometimes Stillwater experiences some snow in the winter. I myself, didn't bring a winter coat and I never missed it. During my semester abroad I was told that Oklahoma is a region where, especially in the spring, tornadoes could occur occasionally. But don't worry! Stillwater is at a special location that tornadoes circumvent.

Sports

Most American schools are all about sports. So is Oklahoma State. The school's number 1 sport is football. To say it in numbers: The city of Stillwater has about 46,000 people. However, the stadium holds about 65,000 people. Right from day 1 one, you'll be a part of the Cowboy family and cheer on your football team on game days. People say, once you leave the University, you'll bleed orange, the school's color. Football takes place during the Fall Semester, so is Basketball. However, there are lots of other sports to watch in the spring semester like Baseball. Though, my personal favourite actually was the Rodeos. Yes, our school has a rodeo team. Every year in the fall semester, teams from all over the state meet at Stillwater to have a week long rodeo event.



America's greatest Homecoming

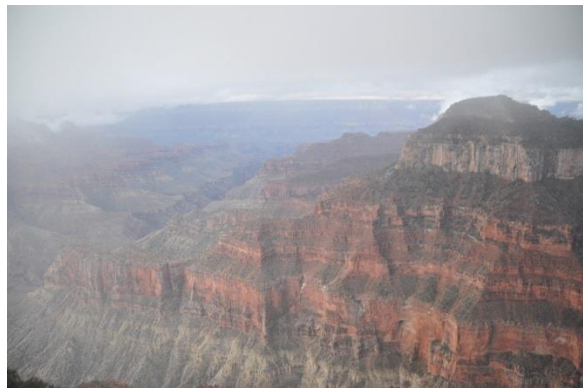
Related to football is always homecoming. OKState is labelled as "America's greatest Homecoming". The university and the student body put in lots of effort to make Homecoming the greatest there is. Homecoming is a week of festivities for students with the peak of a football game on Saturday. During



Homecoming all alumni come back to their school to walk around town and see the football game. Have you ever heard of homecoming decks? That's when the Greek life comes up with enormous housing decorations made out of steel, chicken wire, tissue paper and motors for movement. To make our Homecoming America's greatest Homecoming the Greek life invests hours and hours months in advance to build the decks.

Travelling

Texas is not far from Oklahoma. The Study Abroad Office will organize some trips to Texas. You can also just rent a car to drive to Austin, Dallas, Houston or even New Orleans. There are also lots of low-budget airlines that fly out of Oklahoma City and Tulsa. I myself did a little bit of travelling. If you get a chance to get out of Oklahoma and see other parts of the States, you should take it! You'll be able to fly out of Oklahoma City and Tulsa under \$100. The best trip I have ever been on was to the Great Canyon and other smaller Canyons in Utah and Nevada. The pictures I took can't even show the breathtaking beauty of the country's nature!



Politics

When I was an OK State student I was (un)lucky to experience the 2016 presidential election. And in this election Oklahoma entirely turned red (every county was elected republican). Talking politics in the United States is a very delicate topic. Germany and its politics are a lot more liberal than republican politics. So, be aware what statements you give, you can easily step into a "Fettnäpfchen". Many college students might be more liberal, but not all of them. Americans barely critic their own party, but will easily start a "shit-storm" about the other party and most times it is not based on facts. Again, hold yourself back, because criticism about their own party and country is not handled that well.

Visa

For your semester abroad, you'll need to get the J-1 Visa. The process to receive a visa is rather easy. Oklahoma State University will send you the DS-2019 document. Having received that, you can now apply for an appointment in the embassy or a consulate (Munich). In the consulate they'll ask you some questions about our semester abroad and will keep your passport to include your visa and send it back to your home. Before visiting the consulate, make sure that you have paid the visa fee, as well as the Sevis fee! These are two different transactions.

Budget:

Before going abroad you have to make sure that all your expenses are covered for an entire semester. There will be a few fees that don't exist in Germany. There's an international student fee (\$75), orientation fee (\$75), and the cost for your books that are recommended to purchase/rent (approximately 250\$). Keep in mind, that renting books online is a lot cheaper than getting it from the university. Also, you are required to purchase the University's health insurance plan (600\$). Even though, you will have to pay every single fee listed there, you will most likely be better off than most domestic students since exchange students do not have to pay any tuition. A semester abroad in the states will definitely be more expensive than an Erasmus-semester. However, it is a 100% worth it. Also, you get the opportunity to apply for the Fulbright undergraduate scholarship. It is a decent amount of money to pay for your flight and expenses while studying abroad.

Housing

One major point to ponder before going abroad is housing. Where will you be living during your semester abroad? I personally lived off-campus. And I would recommend everyone to do so. However, it will take some effort to find a room. Off-Campus housing is slightly cheaper than living on campus and you will most likely already have everything (kitchen, washer, dryer) you need for living in the house. This is also a great change to get to know the American culture and make new friends. If you chose living off-campus housing, I highly recommend not living too far from campus, since you will not have a car and the buses are not very reliable. I myself went every single day to class by bike. On-Campus housing also has its advantages. Living on-campus means that you will only live a few minutes walking distance from every single classroom. If you chose the cheapest dorm room (Drummond) you have to share a room with an American student. All students are required to live in the dorms their first year of college. So, living on-campus will give you the real college experience. Living in Drummond means, that there is no kitchen available. However, there are many dining opportunities all over campus. If you live in Drummond you approximately pay \$400 each month. Living in the nicer student housings (single room, kitchen) it will be between \$500-\$1000 per month.

My semester at Oklahoma State was by far my best college experience. You'll make lots of friends, be that natives or other international students. The American people are very nice and love to help out an international student if there are any difficulties. It's a great place to start networking. I never had the urge to come home early. Just one semester at OkState goes by quickly, make the most of it!