

Interim report: Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia

My first term here in Wolfville now is soon over. Just one more exam and then I'm done. Until today, my first term was very busy, in a good way, and I had so many wonderful experiences within the university as well as outside of it. Wolfville is a really small town but with a wonderful charm and unbelievable friendly people. If you're not sure, whether you want to stay in a bigger city or in a small town, just try it out. You will not miss a thing here and it's a very special and unique feeling to be a part of such a nice community. Also, the Acadia community is really welcoming and helpful for all your concerns. The campus life is quite different from the most German universities, but you will customize soon and I'm pretty sure you'll love it.

When I arrived here, my first few hours in Canada were pretty stressful. My flight was three hours late and because of that I missed my shuttle from Halifax to Acadia. But it went all well due to the help of many nice people even in the middle of the night at the airport. So, I think, even if everything going wrong, you don't have to panic. The people will help you if you ask for it. I never made another experience since I'm here and they are always glad to help. But still, maybe you should consider coming a few days early. For me the orientation days were starting right the next morning, so I had maybe 2 hours sleep before that, due to the circumstances and I didn't had any time to organise myself in my new surroundings. Therefore, my first week was pretty stressful and with a huge lack of sleep.

The orientation days itself are really helpful, but it's also quite a lot. You have three days full of activities, ceremonies, lectures and meeting new people all day long, so these days will be very busy. After the three days, the term will start right away. Which makes it much more stressful in the beginning. But even if I remember that the first two weeks were a lot, I really enjoyed them and already learned a lot and met so many nice people. After the first week, maybe two weeks, you already will feel like you study at Acadia for much longer.

And now a few things you should know before you go to the exchange. First, you have to pay your study fees for housing, meal plan, health insurance etc. all at once in the beginning of the semester, which for me, was a lot. Make sure, you have the money to do so, there will be no delay for whatever reason. Maybe get an onetime study loan, because even if you have a scholarship or if you get Bafög, these things will be paid monthly during your stay, and not in the beginning. The next thing would be, that it is kind of hard to find off-campus housing. I would recommend on-campus living, because you are much more in contact with university life and you will save a lot of time, even if Wolfville is not that big, but on-campus you have everything you need in about 7 minutes or less. But in most cases off-campus would be cheaper. If you decide to live off-campus you should start searching for housing at least three months early.

Another thing is the meal plan. It's a plan which allows you to visit the meal hall between 8am and 10pm as often as you want to. If you are living on-campus, you must have at least a meal plan for five days a week, if you're living off-campus it's optional. But for me the meal plan is a life saver. You will be occupied by a lot of things during the term and every minute you save for yourself it's worth it. Furthermore, there are kitchens in each residence, so you could cook for yourself, but they are not equipped in the beginning. So, if you want to cook something for yourself, you have to get everything from pans to pots to even cutlery. And groceries, especially vegetables and fruits, are pretty expensive here. Even if the meal plan is a lot of extra money, I would recommend it.

Now for the residences. In your room, you will find a mattress on your bed and the common furniture but that's it. You will not have a blanket or a pillow in the beginning for example. You can ask for it at residence life, but if you arrive on a weekend or after their office hours, you need to

consider that. Furthermore, they have shared rooms options. They are cheaper than the single rooms, but I wouldn't recommend it, if you're not completely sure, you will be okay with that. If you share your room for only one term, it might be okay. But you will not have any private space for a long term, and I didn't expect it to be that exhausting. A few friends of mine I met here and I are all living in shared rooms and we all regretted our decision very soon, even if we like our roommates. Another thing with the residences, they are closing in the winter break. Which means, they are actually closing, and you have to leave. You can stay on campus, but you have to pay extra for that, and the meal hall will be closed, so you would need to cook for yourself. When we first heard that, we couldn't really believe that, but now three of my friends here and I just planned a trip to Quebec City and Toronto during the break. Which is also expensive, but at least we will have a little adventure.

Which brings me to the next thing about studying in Canada, especially in Wolfville. Canada is big, and I knew it, but it's still way bigger than I imagined. One trip to Toronto by car is about 20 hours and if you don't fly, there are little other options to get anywhere than by car. Canada's public transport is, except for bigger cities like Montreal or Toronto, basically not existing. There are a few long-distance busses or trains, but most of them are too expensive to afford and inconvenient. Even if you will stay around the area, you barely have other options than driving by car. I don't have a driver's license, so that would have been a huge issue for me, if I wanted to see anything around Wolfville or Nova Scotia, but luckily, I found some good friends right in the beginning, which are able to rent cars or have own cars. Without them I couldn't have seen as much as I did.

I hope, even if there are many things to bear in mind, I didn't lower your anticipation. Wolfville is a beautiful town, especially now with Christmas coming up and Acadia is a really nice university to stay with lots of opportunities. So far, I had a really great time, with lots of wonderful experiences and I'm so glad that I'm here. I really wouldn't change anything and I'm so excited for the next few months. I'm already a bit sad that half the time is over.