

Global Exchange: Final Report

University of Arizona

Fall 2023

Degree program in Freiburg: Liberal Arts and Sciences-UCF (Bachelor)

Classes taken during the exchange in: Introduction to Programming II, Web Programming, Programming for Informatics Applications, Introduction to Human-Computer Interaction

Report

Preparation Phase

My aspiration to study at U.S. universities through an exchange program was driven by the prospect of experiencing American university life without the burden of tuition fees. As a student at University College Freiburg, I had the privilege of priority acceptance at the University of Arizona, thanks to a bilateral agreement. I initiated my application through Freiburg's International Office Global Exchange, submitting the required documents such as a CV, TOEFL scores, and an essay. After discussions with the International Office, I was nominated for the University of Arizona exchange program.

Subsequently, I applied for several scholarships, including DAAD, Baden-Württemberg Stipendium, and Auslandsbafög, of which I was successful in securing the latter. Post-nomination, the University of Arizona's International Office was proactive in communication, swiftly responding to my inquiries, facilitating my university account setup, and guiding me through online registration for the Computer Science Faculty.

While exchange students are exempted from tuition, the University of Arizona requires additional fees. For the fall semester alone, these fees amounted to \$2,400 (1000 for the health insurance), and for a full year, the cost was \$5,500 (2700 for the health insurance). Fortunately, my Auslandsbafög covered most of these expenses, reimbursing \$2,000 for the winter semester. Auslandsbafög covers only 500 dollars for the health insurance in USA per semester and covers all other fees.

Acquiring a U.S. visa from the Frankfurt U.S. Consulate was a smooth process. After submitting the necessary documents and a brief interview, my visa was approved and issued within three days of my appointment.

Staying in Arizona

The University of Arizona, located in Tucson, is in a relatively affordable region compared to other U.S. states. Securing accommodation proved challenging; campus dormitories, while conveniently located, were priced at approximately \$800. I found more economical housing off-campus by coordinating with other international students through a WhatsApp group facilitated by the University's International Office, eventually settling in a shared house for \$450 a month. It was a 15-minute drive to campus and 40 min by bus.

Transportation in Arizona can be challenging, given the infrequent bus services. I recommend either purchasing a car or arranging shared rides to the campus. The cost of living in terms of groceries and meals is comparable to Germany, especially when shopping at stores like Walmart or Costco. While Auslandsbafög was sufficient for basic expenses, I also worked on-campus jobs, found through the Handshake app, for additional income, which helped finance travels across the U.S. I suggest to start searching on-campus jobs before you come to the USA, around June-July.

As a student at University College Freiburg (UCF), I had the privilege of attending lectures across a diverse range of departments, including neuroscience, computer science, ISTA, biology, and the Honors College, which offers interdisciplinary courses. I recommend selecting courses that align with your future academic goals, as these classes offer numerous opportunities and the potential for valuable networking. The computer science courses, in particular, were quite demanding, even more so than those at the University of Freiburg. While the exams were somewhat less challenging, the courses required substantial time commitment due to obligatory homework and project work. Although enrolling in 12 credits per semester is a requirement, I opted for a heavier course load. However, for better time management and a balanced schedule, I advise sticking to the 12-credit minimum.

The University of Arizona boasts an impressive campus, brimming with a variety of social events in which you can immerse yourself. Additionally, they offer specialized programs for international students, which I highly recommend participating in. The campus nightlife is vibrant and dynamic, with numerous associations available to join for parties and other activities.

It's important to note that Arizona experiences intense heat from August to November, making it challenging to be outdoors in the mornings during these months. However, the period from November to January is quite pleasant, with sunny weather maintaining a comfortable temperature range of about 20-25 degrees Celsius.

Travel tips

Arizona offers a plethora of scenic hiking trails that are must-see. Begin your exploration with Mount Lemmon, and don't miss the opportunity to visit Kitt Peak Observatory for an exceptional stargazing experience. It's best to visit either at night or just before sunrise, and I recommend planning your trip during a new moon for optimal viewing. Additionally, a visit to Phoenix and its historic Old West town is highly recommended. Essential destinations also include Sedona and the Grand Canyon, both of which are iconic Arizona landmarks. The University organizes trips to these locations, so be sure to keep an eye on their events calendar for these opportunities. Tucson is near to Mexico, that is why people can easily organize a trip to Mexico but you have get allowance from coming back from the coordinator of U of A. I did not have time to get, it is also possible.

Post-semester, a trip to California is highly recommended, providing a quintessential American experience. Additionally, affordable flights from Phoenix to Hawaii are available in October, offering an unforgettable travel experience at a reasonable cost.

In summary, my exchange program in the U.S. was not only academically enriching but also a culturally immersive experience, enhanced by strategic financial planning and active participation in campus life and beyond.