Freiburg Global Exchange: Interim Report

Michigan State University
Fall 2023
Degree program in Freiburg: History, Political Science (Bachelor)
Classes taken during the exchange in: History, Political Science

I arrived at the Detroit Airport on the eve of August 22nd and took the Michigan Flyer-shuttle to East Lansing. My first night I stayed at the Umoja House, a lovely AirBnB/guest house with the most amazing hosts. The next morning, the host gave me a ride to my dorm (Abbott Hall). A spot in the dorm is guaranteed for every exchange student and if you are lucky (as I was) you can even get a single room. The 23rd was Move-In-Day, so the campus was incredibly busy with students and their move-in helpers as well as organizers. After unpacking I strolled around the (beautiful, but extremely large) campus before getting dinner with some other exchange students (we organized it through an already existing WhatApp-group).

Even before departure, the help I received from the ASP&E (American Semester Program and Exchanges)-administrators was remarkable. That continued on campus with a mandatory welcome orientation event on the 25th. We learned all about the campus, possible travel destinations and most importantly we had a chance to meet each other. This event was only one of many orientation events throughout the first week on campus, but it was the only one mandatory for exchange students. The day after, ASP&E organized a beach day at Lake Michigan, one was able to register for from back home. There I first made real connections with people I am happy to now call my friends! The most important non-exchange orientation event may be the Student Involvement Fair where the clubs introduce themselves to everyone. I myself was an engaged member of Philosophy Club this semester, but I know of many other exchange students that went to other clubs (from knitting to rocket building). These clubs are the perfect opportunity to meet Americans, so don't be shy!

The first week of classes is the so called Add/Drop-week. Meaning you can add and drop as many courses as you want. So even if the courses you got placed into (out of the 10

courses you listed as preferences during the admission process) turn out to not be your thing after you received the syllabus, you can still drop them for other courses. Even though I got my first four preferences I dropped one of the courses (Modern United States), because I did not like the outlook for the semester. Instead, I went to three other courses and picked the one I liked best. It was a good choice and by far the most interesting class I had this semester.

MSU is a big sport school. Sadly, the main attractions (Men's football and basketball) were/are struggling a bit (football a lot) this year. Still: go to as many sports events as possible! I am not a huge sports fan myself, but many of the tickets for the less popular sports (soccer, volleyball, lacrosse) are free to students and even men's basketball and ice hockey only costs around $ 7-10 and the atmosphere is amazing. The only real hard hitter is football, with student ticket prices around $ 50-200 depending on the game.

As for some harder tasks, it is not super easy getting to know Americans. Especially because you will be quick to meet all the other exchange students. Talk to people in your classes! I'm not good at it either and classrooms before class are often weirdly silent and it feels uncomfortable to just start talking to someone you don't know. But still do it! Getting to know Americans is so incredibly worth it. I had the luck of one of my fellow students talking to me after class, trying to figure out my accent. He and I are good friends now, which gave me the opportunity to pass Thanksgiving and Christmas with him and his family. Such impressions you can only get if you get out of your comfort zone. And: if you have an accent (like most of us have), then you always have an easy ice breaker and thing to talk about (even tough you have to endure a lot of bad German being thrown at you as a trade-off).