

# University of Freiburg Global Exchange: Erfahrungsbericht · Exchange Report

**Partner university:** University of Texas at Austin, United States

**Semester/s attended:** Fall 2024 and Spring 2025

**Degree program in Freiburg:** Exercise Science (Bachelor)

**Classes taken abroad in:** Health Education, Kinesiology, Physical Education

Hook'em horns!! That is the slogan of the University of Texas at Austin. This report is about my exchange year in Austin, Texas and the college life that I was able to experience.

Everything started with a meeting with the exchange coordinator in Freiburg. She sent me the Exchange Guide that helped me organize the stay abroad and collected all the information that I needed for my exchange. To decide which university I want to go to, I looked up every undergrad program and created an order of the programs. I always wanted to study in a big university, to experience the typical college lifestyle, with a big campus, big lecture halls, a big football stadium and in general big sport facilities. Austin, Texas completely met those requirements.

After I got the information that I can study at UT, I immediately started to look for housing. Finding housing in Austin was not easy and nerve wracking. Luckily, I had an American family friend that told me that it can take some time with housing, and it is most likely to get housing only a few months before the semester. It turned out to be the case and I got a place in one of the cheapest housing options in Austin. If you want to study in the US, you must be aware of really expensive rent prices and that shared rooms with another student are completely common in college. I ended up living in a community house, also called Co-op, where I paid around 950\$ per month for a shared room. This community house had a specific style of living and by having labor work like cooking or cleaning duties, the price of the accommodation emerges. Furthermore, we got two warm meals per day which makes this rent price way more acceptable. Besides that, living in a Co-op makes meeting people and making friends easier. I lived in the house called Laurel and I would recommend that

house out of all other Co-op houses. In my opinion it is the cleanest one and the organization and the meals are good.

Paying for groceries in the US is also expensive, which is why I was happy about getting meals. As an exchange student it is most likely that you will not have a car and therefore it can get more complicated to get to the bigger supermarkets. There is public transportation which is free for UT students so there is a way to get your groceries but living in a Co-op made my life undoubtedly easier. In general, I really liked living in a Co-Op and I made good friends from it.

I studied exercise science, and I really enjoyed the lectures. Almost 100% of my classes were theoretical and therefore you do not have practical courses where you make sport yourself. There are a few options, but they are less credit points worth it. I had one class where I had a lab, it was called "Applied Human Anatomy". It was one of my favorite classes, even though it was one of the most challenging ones. In general, I would recommend taking classes that have a lab. In those classes you get more practical experience, you have more hand-on lessons, and I worked with different models of the human body. In my class we had one more meeting per week where we only worked with models and our bodies. This makes those classes more intense, but it also gives you a deeper understanding of the topic.

Most of my classes were seminars, which made them interactive and talking to the professor was common. Some of them were lectures, with hundreds of people, where the professor presented the slides and held a monologue. Both can be fun, and it depends on what your own preferences are, but I prefer the seminars. In smaller classes, you can build a relationship with the professors, and you can even get jobs or research opportunities from them. In the American college life student- professor relationships are more familiar than in Germany. Some of my friends even got invitations to their professor's home to have dinner. This is normal and helps build a stronger relationship. First, it was difficult to understand everything my professor said, and writing essays in English was challenging but I got used to it and in my second semester I had more fun in my classes, as I understood more and was

not too nervous to hold presentations and assignments anymore. I would recommend doing two semesters, because then you don't have the feeling like you need to see everything in just one semester. This can be stressful and travelling at weekends is almost impossible due to the assignments that you need to do during the semester. Also, in the second semester you kind of know what is going on and how everything works and selecting classes for the second semester was way better than for my first semester. You are on time with all the other students, and you have a higher chance of getting the classes that you want. In my first semester I was too late for all the interesting classes and the classes were already full. I do not know if this was my fault, but I would recommend texting your academic advisor from your host university as soon as possible. Mine was super welcoming, friendly and still managed to get me interesting classes.

The UT campus is big and really pretty. Austin weather can get hot, up to 40 degrees Celsius in the summer and therefore outside it is burning hot and inside it is cold, and you need a hoodie. Americans' love their air conditioning, which makes restaurants and for example the library chilly. Such as the campus, the city of Austin is also amazing, and you have a lot of fun things to do. There is a lake going through Austin, where you can go swimming, stand-up paddling, or kayaking. Besides that, nightlife in Austin offers live music, pubs, comedy shows and clubs. Me as a girl always felt safe, especially on campus. Even though there are some homeless people, they do not talk to you and mind their own business.

Another thing that I would recommend when going to Austin is getting the Big Ticket. This ticket costs around 250\$ and is a ticket for all sport events. It does not guarantee a ticket for every football game, especially not the derbies but I made it to around four out of six home games. Besides that, with the big ticket you can attend basketball games, volleyball games, baseball games and many more. If you only stay for the spring semester, you can watch volleyball and football games; if you stay in the fall semester you can watch Baseball and Basketball games. The sport events were probably one of my favorite things in Austin, Texas. The atmosphere was amazing and being in those huge stadiums was an amazing experience.

I do not think I have any specific tips. America is a country where you can get everything, and you will have a good time. If you are going to live in a Co-op don't expect to live in a modern and fancy apartment. It can be shocking when you walk in the cold and undecorated room but there is a Target on campus where you can buy stuff to decorate your room, so it feels more like home. Something else that I want to say is that maybe getting a job on campus can be nice and helps to make more friends. The American college culture makes it difficult to make friends in class, because of back-to-back classes and limited time to talk to your classmates. I worked on campus as a lifeguard, never worked as a lifeguard before, but I did my certification there and had the best time with my lifeguard friends. They had a lot of parties and social events, and I met a lot of my closest friends in this job. A little extra money is also not bad due to the prices in Austin.

In conclusion, I would recommend studying in the US. It was a great experience, and I learned a lot academically, personally and culturally. Austin is a great city with an amazing university, and I would do it all over again.