

Identifizierungscode: USA-2018- Buda6-w

Liberal Arts and Sciences, Abschluss: 2020

6. Semester

USA

August 2018 – Mai 2019

Penn State University

I was interested in studying in the United States because their universities foster a concept of Liberal Education that I highly appreciate. Since I am studying in English in Freiburg, I thought it would be also very beneficial for me to study in an English speaking country once and experience College life from within. As a political science student, I was also interested in seeing how the presidency of Donald Trump might have affected political participation among students and how younger generations perceive political changes.

To study in the US, it is most important to know that it will be expensive. Information about how much exactly is pretty easy to find, and most likely, you will have to pay exactly what is suggested, as American Universities are corporations that need to make money. The university will contact you with everything you need once you are accepted. If you are willing to fully dive into this culture and stay on campus, get the meal plan, and the insurance, as I did, it will cost much more. I thought this was the only option, but apart from the insurance, this is not true. As for most things, Facebook groups are a great resource to finding apartments that are cheaper and nicer to live at, since one can cook their own food. Nevertheless, housing in an apartment is complicated, as most flats are barely equipped and only sell contracts for an entire year. Food in general is also a little more expensive, and eating on campus is very expensive, if you are not on the meal plan. But even the meal plan costs you 2200 \$ per semester, and the discount you get is just prepaid in the so called "Base Costs", a highly deluding concept. Visa is also expensive and involves an annoying process, but as long as you do it ahead of time, it should be fine. The best way to find all necessary information is to contact a previous student with concrete questions and plan ahead of time.

The University is a large space with an incredible academic, athletic and cultural offer. I was able to dive into many different fields academically, do sports every day and become part of a beautiful theater group that is doing shows for free every other weekend. Professors are extremely friendly, service-oriented and knowledgeable in their fields. I highly enjoyed having access to so many resources, took part in different programs, and went to many lectures held by internationally renowned figures that Penn State offered.

I felt well prepared academically, and it was easy for me to do very well at Penn State, just by regularly doing my work and participating in class discussions. Oral participation is highly appreciated and valued, which I really like. Students are encouraged by their professors a lot, and I think this is very important to get a sense of finding the right path and valuing your own work. This was important for me, as I rather often felt stupid and insecure in Freiburg.

For me, Penn State was a little bit of a difficult experience, as the University lies in the middle of rural Pennsylvania and even though the University has so much to offer, it is still a very closed and conservative space in some regards. There is a great sense of conformity and uniformity among the students, and especially the Undergraduates seemed little interested in meeting different people and creating alternative spaces. Maybe I was a little too old already, but I partly felt a great difference in the level of maturity between my Freiburg peers and some Undergraduates I got to meet at Penn State. Unfortunately, I felt the prejudice of American superficiality justified a little bit, as it was pretty hard for me to connect more profoundly with my peers. Nevertheless, I learned a lot about myself, got encouraged by my professors and used my time very wisely in my view, by taking advantage as much as possible of the broad offer. I learned that I am a good student in my own way and that there is always an individual path that will fit exactly my goals and talents.