

General Information About the School

During the fall semester of 2018 I have had the opportunity to study abroad at the University of Central Florida (UCF) in the United States. It truly was an amazing experience meeting people from all over the world and experiencing the American college life.

UCF has multiple campuses spread across the Orlando area. During my exchange I stayed on the main campus which is located on the north east side of Orlando. Orlando itself is a nice city that offers a lot of recreational possibilities. Especially Lake Eola Park is a place you should visit. In the United States everything is very spread out. If you wanted to go to downtown Orlando from campus, it would take you approximately 30 minutes.

The UCF main campus is a very neat and has a lot of green. Since UCF is one of the biggest universities in the United States, and has approximately 66.000 students, the campus is very big. I stayed at the Nike and Hercules dorms located on the south side of campus and it took me about 15 minutes to walk to my classes. If you want to walk around the whole campus, it would take you at least an hour. The best part about living on campus was that we were located close to all the facilities that UCF offers. It was just a 2-minute walk for me to go to the (huge) gym, soccer pitches, volleyball fields or the leisure pool. Almost all facilities at UCF are offered for free which is really amazing.

Practical Information

If you want to study in the United States, you have to be prepared to do a lot of paper work. The US has a very strict VISA procedure that requires you to submit a lot of documents and attend a face to face interview at the US embassy in Amsterdam. Same applies for the class registration. You have to send a lot of documents (including proof of certain vaccinations) to UCF before you are allowed to register for classes. Luckily, everything is well explained in the guide they send you. They explain everything you have to do step by step which is really helpful. If you still have additional questions you can always send a mail to the contact person at UCF who will almost always reply within in a day. If you plan to go to UCF (or the United States in general) I recommend that you work proactive on your application and try to get it over with as soon as possible.

The International office at UCF is called UCF Global. During your stay you can always go to Global if you have any problems. Certain American students volunteer at UCF Global to work as ambassadors. These people are amazing and became very good friends of mine. They organize really cool activities and will take you anywhere you want by car. Most of the exchange students were picked up at the airport by these ambassadors. It is just amazing to see how involved and motivated these students are. One of the ambassadors even took me and a few other Dutch guys to her home in Miami to celebrate thanksgiving. During the fall 2018 semester, we were with a total of 95 exchange students.

During my exchange, I stayed on main campus. You get an apartment which you share with 1 other exchange student and two American students. You have two bathrooms and a shared living room and kitchen. Everything in the apartment is really basic but it suffices. When I entered my apartment the first time, it felt really stark, but you get used to it really quick. The thing that is a bit annoying with respect to housing is that you have to buy everything for in your room and the kitchen. You don't have pots, pans, silverware, blankets, sheets, pillows. Some exchange students had the luck that their American roommates were willing to share their stuff but me and my other exchange roommate unfortunately had to buy everything. Luckily Walmart is very close to campus and has a wide variety of those products. The application for housing goes really easy and you almost don't have to do anything yourself.

Living in the United States is not cheap. Especially food and housing are expensive compared to the Netherlands. For my on-campus dorm I had to pay a total of \$3400. This comes down to about \$850 per month. My monthly budget consisted of the following accounts:

- Housing	\$850
- Food	\$400
- Transport	\$150
- Books	\$50
- Travelling	\$250
- Activities	\$250
- Miscellaneous	\$250

Take into account that I made a lot of trips during my exchange and that I almost didn't cook at home but went out for food. It is very possible to spend less on these accounts. Besides that, I was a big fan of the UCF merchandise which cost me a lot of money as well. Public transportation in Florida is not that well organized as in the Netherlands. I was lucky because I made some American friends over the semester who had no problem with taking me with them for grocery shopping. Without them I would have to UBER every time or ask the ambassadors.

Activities

During my semester at UCF I didn't sit still for a single minute. There was just so much stuff to do when you did not have to study or wanted to take a break. Over the whole semester I made trips to:

- New York
- The Bahamas (organized by the Global Ambassadors)
- Miami
- Key west
- Washington
- Ginnie springs
- Wekiva Springs
- The Everglades
- Cocoa Beach

During regular weeks there was a lot to do as well. I spend most of my time on the soccer pitches, the RWC sports centre and the Leisure Pool.

During the first week of class, the global ambassadors organize an activity every day which you can attend. These activities are a great opportunity to meet your fellow exchange students.

Academic Information

The American academic system is different from the one we are used to in the Netherlands. Instead of a final exam (and a midterm) you have a lot of quizzes and (group) assignments you have to complete over the semester. The advantage of this is that you can get a high grade relatively easy because the assignments and quizzes are relatively easy while the finals are a bit harder. The biggest difference that I noticed was that participation is way more important in the US than here in the Netherlands. For my classes we had in-class activities almost every time. Attendance is mandatory for almost every class.

I followed the following classes at UCF:

Course code	Name	ECTS	Comment
GEB4522	Data Driven Decision making	6	Requires a certain proficiency with Microsoft Excel
MAN4350	Performance Management	6	A lot of in-class activities which are included on the exams
MAN4441	Conflict Resolutions & Negotiations	6	Distinguished Professor that is a bit old fashioned. Class really teaches you some useful skills
MAN4583	Project Management	6	Interesting assignment that you do over the whole semester (managing your own (made-up) project)
MAR3407	Integrated Marketing and Sales/Contemporary Selling	6	Very intensive class with a lot of activities and assignments

Registering for classes takes a bit of work but there is always the contact person at UCF Global who can help you. If you plan well, you can choose the moment you want to follow your classes. In my case I only had classes on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday which allowed me to travel a lot over the weekends.

In the end, I would really recommend doing a semester abroad to anyone who has the opportunity. It is amazing to experience another culture in such a way. You make friends from all over the world and learn a lot about the country you go to. Besides that, I would really recommend UCF as your exchange destination since it is such a beautiful and energetic University. GO KNIGHTS!

Pictures say more than a thousand words

