

Exchange Student Travel Report – Goizuetta Business School – Ishai Rosenberg

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Studying in the US

Studying an MBA in the US (and I guess in Europe's top-tier schools, either) is a very different experience than studying in Israel.

While the difficulty level of the study is similar, the time spent studying is much greater: for every 1 hour in class, you would spend 3-5 hours studying at home, in-comparison to 1-1.5 hours at home in Israel.

The reason for this is the method of teaching: while in Israel the method tend to emphasize presentations and the "high-stress" time is before the tests, in the US, there is much heavier emphasis on case studies and group projects, meaning: much more work at home.

On the plus side, there are fewer tests. For example, I took 6 courses and had no in-class test – just two home mid-terms and one home final test. **The grading is based mostly on home projects and on class participation – which is mandatory and is part of the grade – up to 40%**, in two of my courses. In most courses you cannot miss more than two classes. Class participation tends to involve "cold calls" – calling a student to the white-board to solve one of the home-work problems – you can regard this as an equivalent to pop quiz. Again – this means that you need to be prepared to every class.

Because of that, full-time students in the US actually are actually full time students – they stop working for the two years of the MBA and focus on studying only. For example, I took 6 courses in Goizuetta, for a total of 18 weekly hours of study. While in Israel I had similar

course-load semesters, where I worked full time while studying, this semester took almost all my spare time.

While most teachers in Israel come from the academic-world, in the US there is a mixture of academic teachers and people with many years of experience in the industry, meaning the classes tend to be more practical in nature.

One more thing worth mentioning is the extracurricular activities in the university. There are many clubs in every top-tier school, varying from sports and leisure clubs (the wine club is very popular...) to ethnic groups clubs (including Jewish clubs) to "study-related" clubs, like the finance club.

Since those clubs are not common in Israel, **I encourage you to participate in some of the clubs meetings, especially in concentrations other than your own.** This would allow you to broaden your horizons, and to catch a glimpse of other opportunities. I, for example, participated in the consulting club meetings (I'm a tech-guy) – which gave me some new and interesting tools. This is also another opportunity to meet more people with the same interests as you and to expand your network abroad.

Last thing worth mentioning is the job search, career advancement or "positioning": Many of the people who study an MBA are career changers that want to switch from one industry to another, sometimes taking it to the extreme: I had a classmate who was a photographer and wanted to become an investor banker. Thus, all the business schools offer courses and help in writing resumes, cover letter, etc, and top-tier school bring representatives from big companies from many industries, like Bain (consulting), IBM (IT) and Morgan-Stanley (investment banking), to present their companies and answer students' questions.

If you are interesting in working abroad, you should participate in some of those meetings (there are too many to participate at all of them...) – **networking is absolutely essential to find a job in the best companies, and should consult with the career guidance office (every business school has one)** called CMC in Goizuetta – they can provide you with very useful tips per-industry, review for your resumes, connect you with the school's alumni in the industry, etc. Notice that those offices tend to offer much more services than in Israel, due to the "job-hunting nature" of the degree in the US.

Atlanta

Atlanta is the biggest city in Georgia, with about 500K people in Atlanta DC, and 2.5M in the suburbs. It is 10 minutes of driving from the university.

The city has vibrant night-life, with many restaurants and night clubs near-by.

However, this city has a big down-side: its mass-transit system (called Marta): it doesn't get even to the Tel-Aviv's level – not to mentioned place like New-York: the buses are not frequent, they are unreliable and their coverage of Atlanta is very poor. There is a subway system, but with the same disadvantages: not frequent and with very few stations.

In-short, while the city itself is great, you should have an access to a car in-order to leverage it – especially if you're coming with a family or with your significant other.

This can be done either by buying a used-car (maybe teaming up with some other exchange students), and sell it in the end of the semester – used cars are not very expensive in the US. One of my colleagues, for example, bought a 6-years old Dodge for 2,500 dollars. Other possibilities are using a Zipcar (cars rented by-the hour, which you need to take and return to the same parking lot – there are few of them at the campus's parking lots), or find a colleague who owns a car and hang with him or her...

Do note, however, that the parking prices in the university are not cheap.

Two of the major attractions Atlanta has to offer are the CNN center where you can see live shows and the world of Coke – where you taste more than 60 different flavors of Coke beverages from around the world.

The cost of living in Atlanta is not high compare to other US cities – but it is significant. I've rented a huge 3 rooms apartment with a partner, near the campus for 550\$ a month for each. If you rent alone – you'll probably go up to 700\$ per month. The dorms in-campus are not much cheaper than those prices.

Emory University

Emory is located in Decatur, a small town which is actually a suburb of Atlanta.

Goizuetta Business School is one of the university's highlights, together with the law school and the med school.

The business school is consistently ranked in the 20th-30th in the US and is considered to be very good. Its main focus is marketing, but like all top tier business school – all fields (e.g. finance, accounting, etc.) are well represented.

The university has 3 campuses (the Braiercliff campus, the Clairmont campus and the main campus) adjacent to each other – and the business school is in the main campus.

The university is very impressive: its campus is huge; it has 2 gyms (one in the main campus and one in the Clairmont campus), with basketball and tennis (and football) courts and pools, both open to the students for free. The computer labs are amazing and fully equipped – from conference rooms with leather couches to big-screen (i.e. 40") computer systems.

The university also has its own mass-transit system, which, unlike that of Atlanta – is very good, punctuates and frequent – but (sadly) works only inside the campus.

One opportunity that you probably won't want to miss, if you attending the fall semester (i.e. Semester Alef in Israel) is the annual visit of former president Carter (born in Georgia), in the university, where students can ask him questions on various subjects. Considering his views on the middle-east conflict – you might want to ask him a question or two, either...

Courses in Goizuetta

I took 6 courses in Goizuetta, and here are my impressions of each, ranked in a descending order of preference. I should mention, though, that all the courses I took were great, and I would recommend each of them as an elective:

Entrepreneurship – Prof. Goetz

This was my favorite course. While the syllabus was pretty standard – the Prof. is amazing. He is a former comedian, hyper-active person, with more than 20 years as an entrepreneur (and a multi-millionaire – so apparently his stuff does work). His classes are great and filled with funny stories – like when his boss – a big guy, wanted to hit him – and he throw his wig on him in-order to give him time to get away. As a bonus, you get some practical tips to assist an entrepreneur, from the Prof. extensive experience – like how to rent an office for less money. However, not all those tips are relevant to Israel, though – and some are actually Georgia-specific. Prof. Goetz also brings a lot of interesting guest speakers to class: venture capitalists, entrepreneurs, etc. We also had an opportunity to present our business idea to a group of more than 70 VCs that came to class to hear us – and get feedback from them on the idea – something I believe to be essential to everyone who considers starting his own business some day. While most of the course is not work-intensive – the creation of the financial projections is the biggest assignment I had in my entire degree.



A picture is worth a 1000 words: We're in Prof. Goetz class, looking on the world with different glasses...

Facilitating and Leading Teams – Prof. Schechter

This course teaches you how to be a facilitator – meaning helping other people in the team reach an answer to a problem or perform better as a team via structured problem definition and guidance from the facilitator (i.e. yourself). The Prof. has more than 15 years of experience in facilitating teams in Coca-Cola – and every word she says has great practical impact on working in teams from her own experience – Not only as a facilitator, but also as a team leader: How to deal with difficult people? How to move-on to the next subject without making people you don't listen to them? Etc. I highly recommend this course, which also gives you a practical training: by the end of the course you would facilitate a team of BBA's (first degree in business administration) in a task in their course and gain experience on the skills you've learned while doing so. Actually, one of the students in my class secured himself a job-offer because he impressed his interviewers using the techniques he learned in class. The workload in this course is extremely light.

Strategic Decision Analysis – Prof. Noonan

This course is an introduction course on game theory (how to split a pie and make everybody happy with their piece, etc.) – with a twist. Prof. Noonan came from Harvard Business School, and is highly regarded at Goizuetta – his classes are always full. With 5 years as a consultant – he knows a lot about the industry – and he combines a lot of Excel work into the class-work – which to me, as a person who never used Excel for more than drawing a linear graph, was extremely interesting. This course also takes the practical approach, with case analysis that practices the usage of game theory concepts, as well as some lighter classes such as the traditional pie splitting (actual pies - no game theory algorithms are being used) in the last lesson. This course has very heavy workload – the heaviest of all the courses I took – but if you're interested in this topic – I highly recommend it.

Negotiations – Prof. Hill

The best thing about this course is its practical stance. Almost every lesson you have some sort of negotiation practice with (and not against – one of the key topics of this course) other students, and there are several graded negotiations as well, that determine large part of your grade. I found the tips given in it to be useful (especially the ones regarding job offer negotiation) – and they can help you even on your personal life – not just at work. The course has a light work-load.

Marketing Strategy – Prof. Sood

This course is divided to two interwoven parts: on one part you learn theoretical marketing models (e.g. how much clients you'll have in a year), analyze marketing cases and doing marketing projects and presentations, while the second is a competition between groups of 5 students on a computer marketing simulation program, called Markstrat, to beat the other groups in your industry and get the most revenues. This is a great way not only to learn the equations – but also to use them and get the "big picture" of what you do in marketing positions. In-between, you'll get the opportunity to interact with some interesting guest speakers – we presented one of AT&T's senior manager ways to expand AT&T's mobile market share in the US. The work-load on the first part is average, but the Markstrat meetings tend to take a lot of time – at least for our group.

Social Media and Virtual Communities – Prof. Thomas

This course deals with social media sites (like Facebook and Tweeter) and how to leverage their usage in businesses. The project in this course was very interesting: our team helped Cox Media, one of the largest cable providers in the US to create its social media strategy.

Prof. Thomas is extremely knowledgeable in the tech industry, due to his years of experience in that field. He implements the social media concepts in all of his classes: He passed one of our classes in video conference program from Ukraine, where he was for one of his projects, and we also graded ourselves for our class participation and learning. While the course tends to be on the light-side of the work-load – there is a lot of extra reading that takes a lot of your time if you're a slow English-reader, like me.

The Audience Choice: Other Students Recommendation

While I didn't take this course, many students highly recommended Marketing Seminar by Prof. Seth. This course covers marketing in the CEO level (not junior management level like Marketing Strategy). Prof. Seth is one of the top marketing experts in the world and written many books (there is an entire library filled with his books in the first floor of the business school) and a lot of years of experience consulting big companies. The workload in this course seems to be extremely high, with weekly (heavy) case analysis exercises.

Some General Tips

Finally, I'd give some final tips that would help you in every university you'd choose – especially in the US:

Choose the courses you take based (also) on the Professor that teaches them – While this should definitely not be the only factor – give it a significant weight: talk with alums and hear who is a good teacher. There are some teachers that are outstanding – and I'd recommend going to their courses regardless if the courses' topics themselves interest you – so make sure you put some thought at this topic.

Choose courses that you don't have the opportunity to take here – This is your chance to take unique courses that are not available here. Courses like "Managing Unforeseen Events through Improvisation Theatre" might not be available in Israel – but you can definitely find them in HEC (France), for example.

Even in schools that don't have such extraordinary courses (unfortunately, Goizuetta is such a place) – take courses that are not in your concentration. For me, for example, the "[Facilitating and Leading Teams](#)" course was one of those. This is an example for a course that an exchange semester is a perfect opportunity to take, in order to expand your horizons. It is also a good idea to take courses from the school's strong field, where it has a lot of great teachers: "[Marketing Strategy](#)" was such a course for me, and "[Marketing Seminar](#)" would be an even better example.

Ranking does matter! – While the school's ranking should not be the major factor of your decision where to study – it should carry some weight: in the US method of teaching makes you learn a lot from your class-mates via group projects. Students with high potential tend

to go to highly ranked schools – so that's where you should consider going to get the most out of your semester abroad. You still need to check the school's fit to your needs, but all things equal – I'd choose the better ranked school. For US programs – Business-Week is a good guide. For international programs – Financial Times is a good one. The rankings are being posted in the internet for free.

Have fun! – Don't forget that you're abroad – make the most out of it! Try to concentrate all your school days at 3-4 days at most, and have long weekends to travel or spend with the family. Remember that low-cost carriers like EasyJet and JetBlue (US) or RyanAir (Europe) offer cheap flight tickets within the US or Europe – don't miss this opportunity to be in new places. Notice that as a general rule of thumb, it is better to travel during the semester and not at its end – because the prices tend to rise, due to the high demand – and the lines are longer, either. The summer time is especially problematic in this aspect.

Conclusion

I found the semester abroad to be extremely interesting and fun experience. The price of living abroad for 4 months can be high – and the heavy workload makes it a bit more challenging if you go as a part of a family and almost impossible to work with a full course-load – even part time.

However, the experiences, the different method of teaching, the different cultures you encounter (top-tier schools have 35-40% international students on average, meaning you will study with students from China, India, Europe and US, regardless of where you go study), the practical emphasis on both classes and extracurricular options, as-well-as the infinite possibilities make the US the best place for such an experience, in my opinion.

When you take into account that the average tuition of studying abroad is about 40,000\$ per year, or 20,000\$ per semester (in Europe it's even higher) – the 1,500\$-2000\$ (=the price of a semester in Tel-Aviv) you would pay for it as an exchange student from Tel-Aviv is almost a bargain.

In conclusion – this is a once in a lifetime opportunity – and I highly recommend it.

I hope that this report provided you with some useful insights. If you have any more questions, either about Emory or any other topic – please don't hesitate contact me at ishairos@post.tau.ac.il.