

Exchange Summary

This summary is about my student-exchange experience at the University Of Chicago Booth School Of Business in the autumn quarter of 2015.

For me, participating in an exchange during my MBA studies was important because I knew it would enrich my studies in Tel-Aviv both personally and professionally. The only question was which university I would attend. There were many characteristics that I was looking for in a program. First, the program had to be prestigious and from one of the very best schools that attracted top organizations and companies. Second, the program had to be one where I could develop entrepreneurial skills and a successful business project. Third, the program had to be one at which I could build a diverse network of contacts and develop international experience. Finally, I wanted to attend a university in a location where I could enjoy myself for three and a half months and really get the most out of the experience. Booth had all of these characteristics.

Although one academic quarter might sound like a short period, this period had a huge impact on me. It was an amazing, intensive experience at a demanding school. I received a very high-level education amongst the sharpest minds and colleagues.

Studies

The academic level at Booth is high and excellent. The program specializes in economics and finance, and the classes are very demanding and intense. I took three classes in total, and I spent several weekends studying and doing homework. I recommend that you make wise decisions when choosing classes; go over all the syllabuses and find out the number of hours per week you will need to invest in each class, determine how to bid for each course, and review the course schedules. Once you do this, you can choose the right combination for you.

Here is a summary of the courses I took:

1. Building the New Venture – Prof. Waverly Dutch

This course focuses on the managerial and entrepreneurial aspects of starting a new business. It is definitely not a standard Booth course. It covers a different topic each week, and during the quarter, the students simulate building a new venture. I really enjoyed this class, but it was very demanding. If you have a concept for a startup that you want to develop, this is the perfect place for you to present your idea to a highly skilled professor who will help you improve it.

2. Application Development – Prof. Betina Raghu

In this class, my classmates and I built a simple and functional website based on our own idea using a Ruby on Rails web-application framework. For those who have a background in software programming, this class would be easy, useful, and fun. For those who have no background in software programming, this class would be very difficult and demanding, but useful.

3. Digital Marketing – Prof. Mohan Lil

This is a very interesting class that presents useful concepts, frameworks, and strategies about digital marketing built around digital technology, the Internet, and mobile devices. Throughout the course, you will read and analyze many case studies (at least two per week). I highly recommend this class for those who work in the marketing industry.

Accommodation

For me, this was the hardest part of the experience. When you look for housing remotely, you will not always get accurate information. As for the information provided by the university, it definitely was not enough. As a result, many of the exchange students—myself included—were disappointed.

The main part of campus is located in Hyde Park (58 South Avenue). In Hyde Park, you can apply for accommodations in dormitories which are buildings owned by the university. The farthest dorm would be a 20-minutes' walk from campus. I applied for accommodations in these dorms, and like most of the exchange students, I got an answer only two or three weeks before the quarter started. Therefore, it is important to register as soon as possible to avoid being stuck in a long waiting list. Unfortunately, I stayed in the dorm for only two weeks before I was disappointed and moved to another apartment. (Do not do this; I paid a penalty fee of around \$1,000.)

Here are the reasons I moved out of my dorm:

- 1) Hyde Park itself is considered safe, especially because of the security guards everywhere. However, one block south of the area is bad and potentially dangerous. I do not recommend staying around late at night (after 8 pm) in the area.
- 2) There is a 45-minute bus ride from Hyde Park to downtown Chicago, so if you stay in Hyde Park you will not experience the city unless you take the trip.
- 3) The cost of the dorms is around \$1,150 per month, which is considered to be expensive compared to prices downtown.

If you do not live in Hyde Park, another option is to live in downtown. Most of the Booth students live around Millennium Park (2 North Michigan Avenue), which is very close to Gleacher Center, one of Booth's facilities. At Gleacher, classes start after 5 pm (night classes). Most classes are taught in both Hyde Park and Gleacher, which means many students can go to one with no need to go to the other. If you live in downtown and need to go to the Hyde Park, you can take a bus (\$2.25 and a 45-minute ride) or the metro (around \$3.50 and a 15-minute ride). (Do not use the red line CTA to Hyde Park; it is not safe at all.) I rented an apartment in downtown at 1212 South Michigan for \$1,200 per month. It was fully furnished and had two bedrooms. My roommate was also an exchange student, so we

really enjoyed our stay together. Michigan Avenue is one of the most prominent and beautiful streets in Chicago. All the main restaurants, parks, museums, stadiums, and shopping centers were walking distance from my apartment. The area is very safe (even late at night) and accessible by public transportation (buses and Uber). If you take only three courses, you will only need to spend a little time on campus (nine hours per week). The remaining time you will spend studying by yourself at home or meeting with your team members on campus. Since most students live in downtown, we were meeting each other at Gleacher (a 20-minute walk from my apartment). I highly recommend finding a good apartment at a good price in downtown to enjoy an amazing city.

Health Insurance

I obtained university health insurance, which costs around \$400 per month. It is considered to be expensive, and some exchange students arrange for insurance from their home countries for much lower prices. I was pregnant and insurance was very important to me. Receiving university insurance made my regular doctor visits to the University of Chicago hospital (one of the best in the country) very smooth and comfortable.

Tips

- I bought a SIM card from T-Mobile for \$60 per month for unlimited messaging and local calls and 2GB of data.
- Chicago is very cold! Bring warm clothes and beware of the wind. It really is a windy city.
- Arrive at least three days before the quarter starts, and stay at least an extra two days at the end. You will need to do some final things before you leave, especially if you will be living in the dorms.
- No need to open a bank account for a three-month stay.

Summary

I had such a great experience attending one of the top universities in the world. I enjoyed learning from impressive and experienced professors and working with amazing students. At Booth, you can build a great network and enjoy a very beautiful city. This unforgettable experience has expanded my horizons!

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