



Tel Aviv University
TAU Recanati

The Leon Recanati Graduate School of Business Administration

Exchange Summary – Brandeis University - Fall 2011

Brandeis University located in The Great Boston Area, Massachusetts, in a town called Waltham, about 20 minutes ride from Boston.

The University is very known in the US and ranked at the top 30 Universities.

It is known as Jewish sponsored university, so there are many Jewish students and vacations during the Jewish holidays as well.

The International Business School (IBS) is relatively young school so it is not ranked at the top of the Business school lists. 75% of the students are internationals, coming from all around the world, and only 25% are Americans. The average age is about 24 and most of them don't have working experience. The majority of the students studying full time and find a student job in the university since this is the only place you can work with a student visa.

Visa information

All students in the USA need to have student visa (usually J-1) before going to the US. It can take some time since you need to receive DS-2019 form from the University before setting an appointment in the US embassy so start doing it as soon as possible.

Housing

The two main options are to live in the dorms or rent an apartment.

Dorms: graduate students live in the Charles River apartments. There are 2,3 and 5 bedroom apartments. They're all renovated with decent bathroom and kitchen. The 2 bedrooms apartment has big rooms but no living rooms, the other two have big living room but most of the rooms (unless you're lucky) are very small. All bedrooms have a single bed. The dorms are very convenient, you don't have to worry about anything and payment include everything, it is close to the university and to the train station that takes you to Boston and Cambridge and many of the exchange students choose to live there. BUT, it is much more expensive than renting an apartment in Waltham and even in Cambridge.

Apartment: there's an option to rent an apartment, usually with roommates, in Waltham or in Cambridge. Waltham is close to the university but there's not much to do there or where to go out. Cambridge has many cafes, bars but far from the University and you need to take a commuter rail in order to get to Waltham. Therefore, if you choose to live in Cambridge, it is recommended to find an apartment near Porter Square where the train station is. Apartment is cheaper but you need to find it by yourself and usually the rent doesn't include the extra fees such as heating which is a must. Full time students, as opposed to the exchange

students, can't live in the dorm. They are divided approximately 50-50 between those who live in Waltham and those in Cambridge.

Living expenses

Housing and Health insurance is the main big expenses. Housing can be between \$600-900 a month and health insurance around 800\$ for the whole period. Food is cheaper than in Israel and restaurant are more or less the same.

Transportation

If you choose to live in Waltham, there's a free shuttle from the university to downtown Waltham every 30-40 minutes from 7am till 2am and to Boston/Cambridge in the weekends. There's also a commuter rail with a stop located next to the university that takes you to Boston/Cambridge. The commuter rail is a different payment from Boston Subway (called "T") but it has a connection in the commuter rail stops. Its frequency is approximately every 1.5 hours.

If you choose to travel around the area, renting a car is the best way and traveling farther can be easily done with the low cost flight (such as Jet Blue).

Trains are very expensive in the US and most of the time you can find a cheaper flight.

Another option is to buy a car and sell it at the end of the semester. I didn't do it but looking back, it is not that bad option.

Courses

Brandeis expertise is in finance and accounting with many courses in these areas. The rest of the courses are in Economy and Marketing with less variety.

The common studying method is case studies. Every class is a discussion about different case study that you need to prepare in advance. Participation is a great amount of your grade (30-40%) so you need to be ready and participate in class.

I took the following courses:

- Global Marketing / Prof. Xin Wang: Nice and easy course. Focus on how to market product globally.
- Entrepreneurship / Prof. Charles Reed: Each class is divided to two. In the first half there's a discussion about a case study, the second half is a lecture given by different entrepreneur from the industry. The case discussion weren't always too enriched but the guests' lectures were very interesting. Sometimes, the professor offers to students to join him for a day trip sailing on his yacht. I was lucky to be one of those and had a fun and interesting day. I got to drive in a yacht and also talk to the Professor informally.
- Managing Technology and Innovation / Dr. Preeta Banerjee: A little disappointing course. All classes were case study discussion and since most of the students don't have work experience, it wasn't that productive and learning experience. In some of the classes, the professor didn't provide any extra personal experience either.
- Corporate Governance / Prof. Erich Schumann: Very interesting course dealing with the roles and responsibilities of the different constituencies involved in governing a company. The classes are more frontal lectures with few case studies.

Traveling

The great Boston area is a beautiful place! The Subway system (the "T") is very convenient and connects the main cities, Boston and Cambridge.

Many universities located in the area bringing thousands of students from all over the world which makes the place very multicultural.

Boston itself is quite small city. You can walk from one side to the other in about 45 minutes. There are many important sites from the American history so the main tourism is local tourists from all around the US. The "Freedom Trail" which is a red line marked on the sidewalk stakes you to all of them.

There are many nice museums in the city, including the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) which is free with Brandeis student card, Contemporary art museum, Kenndy museum and MIT museum.

There are many restaurants and cafes located mainly in the Newbery & Boylston streets, near Harvard square and in the North End, where you don't want to miss the great Cannoli in the famous Mike's Pastry.

The best places for Shopping are Newbery & Boylston streets, Copley place and the prudential and near Downtown Crossing. The closest outlet located in Wrentham, about 40 minutes from Waltham. During the semester, the faculty hired a bus and arranged a trip to the outlet for those who were interested which was very convenient.

Other recommended activities are going on a boat for Whale watching (during September-October), Sam Adams brewery, City view at the top of the Prudential and tours in Harvard and MIT.

It is also easy to travel around the area, preferably by a car or bus, to places like Cape Cod, Rockport, Newport, Salem, Vermont, Montreal and of course New York City. The cheapest and easiest way to go to New York is by bus. It takes about 4-4.5 hours and costs around 10-25\$. You need to buy the tickets in advance online and it's cheaper the more early you buy them. The most recommended bus company is Bolt Bus. Others include Mega Bus, World Wide Bus and Greyhound.

It is also a great opportunity to travel all around the US, from the east coast to the west. It wasn't the first time for me in the US so I chose to go to places that I didn't visit before: Washington DC, Chicago, Niagara Falls and Toronto, Canada. I also would recommend going to San Francisco, Las Vegas, Grand Canyon and Florida.

Time goes by very quickly and studies are getting more intense towards the end of the semester so take the opportunity to travel as soon as possible. Also, the weather is getting worse when the winter arrive so travel as long as it's still warm.

Recreation

Since 75% of the students are internationals, most of the students are alone in the US and looking for company. That's mean that there are a lots of activities both spontaneous and organized by the faculty.

During the semester, IBS organized many activities such as trips to Salem, drive to Wrentham outlet, hiking in the mountains, bowling, sailing, duck tour in Boston etc. in the first Friday of every month there's a TGIF (Thanks God It's Friday) gathering with Beers and food. Towards the end of the semester there's the semi-formal party. Besides that, there are many places to go out in Boston and Cambridge including restaurants, bars and clubs. Almost every weekend there's a house party or gathering of students going out together to a different club.

Tips & important things to be aware of

Immunizations: you're required to have several immunizations. If you don't have some of them, it is recommended to do them in advance, otherwise you'll be enforced to do it in the University and it is much more expensive.

Health insurance: Massachusetts State has very restricted rules about the student's health insurance. Therefore it's almost impossible to find insurance besides the one that is offered by the University. The problem is that you need to pay insurance for a whole year although you're staying only for few months. They are working on fixing it but meanwhile, it is possible to get a refund for the rest of the months at the end of the semester but it takes some time and effort.

Cellular phone: this is the best way to communicate locally. You can buy sim card online or in stores. If you don't have unlocked phone, there are simple phone to buy which cost around 20\$. When choosing a company, it is important to check also the coverage in the area. As far as I know AT&T has the best coverage in Waltham.

Clothing: winter is very cold. So bring your warmest coat, boots, scarfs, gloves and hat. In addition, there might be occasions when you'll have to dress business casual, so bring proper clothes as well.

General experience

For me, this whole trip was a great experience both studying in the US and travelling. Studying abroad is much different, it is great to get to know many students from all around the world and it is also a good opportunity to travel around and see many places. I recommend it for everyone.

If you have in questions, you're welcome to contact me:

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Enjoy!