

## UNC CHAPEL HILL

S2 2016

BSc ECON

I can honestly say that the semester I spent at the university of North Carolina was the most fulfilling and enjoyable time of my life. If you are considering going on exchange I highly recommend you just go for it and don't look back. Whether you decide



to go to UNC, another US school or anywhere around the world you will have an experience you will cherish forever. From living in a foreign country to making friends from all over the world it will be an experience which will open your eyes to what the world has to offer.

In this report I will briefly outline key points in regard to travel, accommodation, meals, academics and some tips which will help you maximise your time at North Carolina.

### Travel

With 30 days allowed before and after the semester for travel on your F-1 visa I recommend you make the most of it as there is a ton of stuff to see in the US. Also during the fall semester you will get two breaks which provide sufficient time to travel. Firstly fall break will be around mid-October and you will likely get 4 days off class but some professors will happily omit you from classes if they know you are an exchange student who wants to travel as much as possible. For fall break I decide to drive to New Orleans with a group of other intentional students which was a very long trip (13 hours) but completely worth it as New Orleans is a city like no other with its French influence and big party scene. I would also recommend going to Asheville or anywhere nearby as the mountains and forests are most beautiful during this time. The other big break is Thanksgiving. During this break most American students will go back home to relax and enjoy some turkey, many Americans will extend an invite for you to join them and their family for this break and I would encourage doing so as not only do you have great food but you are treated to the great Southern hospitality that the



south is known for. Also as Chapel Hill has a good central location there are many places that you can visit for the weekend such as Washington D.C, Wilmington, Asheville or Charlotte.

## Accommodation

I lived in on-campus housing in the North of campus in a dorm called Cobb. The majority of students live in on-campus residential halls while the rest live in off-campus houses (essential flats) or university owned apartments. There is also the Granville Towers but they are generally for freshman students and it is more expensive than generally campus housing. South campus housing is generally just for freshman, but if you are very social and do not mind the noise these dorms may suit you. However I would recommend the North Campus halls as they have better location in regard to classes, Franklin St (bars, shops etc.), and the dining halls. Some of the north campus halls can be a bit quiet and boring so if you want good location and a decent social scene my recommendations would be the following; Carmichael, Connor community, Parker and Teague.

## Meals

At UNC you have the option to buy a meal plan which allows you to swipe in the two dining halls on campus. The dining halls have a ridiculous amount of food and good variability, but after a couple of months you do get a bit sick of the food as it is all very processed.

Therefore a meal plan of 120 swipes is optimal but I would recommend waiting a week so before buying a plan so you can

find out what others are doing and try the dining hall food and also the food off campus.

On Franklin Street there are many good restaurants but also cheaper places to eat such as Chipotle, Waffle House and Benny's. If you live in on-campus housing you will have access to an oven and microwave but that is it.



## Academics

Classes at UNC are far from easy, I found the workload far more strenuous and most classes were mandatory or if you had an unexcused absence you could lose marks towards your final grade. Another significant difference is that classes are much more weighted internally i.e. the exams are generally 20-30% of the final grade. While at UNC I took 3

economics classes to contribute to my major and one astronomy class just for interest. The economics classes caused me to have many long nights at the library therefore while on exchange I would suggest taking more interest papers if you can as this allows spending more time having fun and also UNC offers 1000's of classes so there should definitely be something that caters your interest. The professors are very good and they actively partake in discussion with the class, it is beneficial to befriend the professors as they will grade more generously and allow you to miss classes if you want to travel.

## General Tips

**Sport Events-** Sports is massive at UNC. The university has one of the greatest athletic programmes in US history and there are sport events happening on campus every week. The entire student body gets behind the sports teams and soon enough you will find yourself chanting UNC songs with 20,000 fellow students, with the marching band and school spirit the atmosphere is unmatched.

**Political correctness-** Just a warning, America and in partially college campus are much more PC than we are in NZ. Swearing is rather frowned upon and some things which pass as 'banter' in NZ do not sit as well in the US so just be a little cautious at first.

**Frats and Sororities-** Greek life is a big deal at UNC. The fraternities will have several big parties and events throughout the year and it is an unreal experience to be able to attend some of these. Sororities generally don't have events as they are associated with the frats. I would not recommend any exchange join a frat or sorority as the process takes almost the whole semester and is extremely strenuous and time consuming. However it is still very easy to experience frat life if that is something you are interested in. For girls it is pretty simple as you will generally always be granted entrance to the parties but for guys it is a bit more difficult. To get into the events you need to get a wristband or be put on the door list by a brother at the fraternity. I was lucky as I played basketball with a group of frat guys but the easiest way to meet these people is during rush. Rush is a 2-week recruitment period where frats will have open events with the intention of finding new members, they really enjoy having foreigners' around so the kiwi accent works a charm. Once you go to an event



you will get to know many people involved in Greek life and therefore going to future events/parties will be much easier.

**Drinking age-** 21, 21, 21... for some unexplainable reason the drinking age in America is 21. This rule is well enforced by the university and by the police, however this should not deter your ambition to attend UNC or visit the land of the free. The bar/club scene is not that big as people generally go to house parties instead which are in abundance every Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Inability to buy alcohol is a bit of a pain, but that's what friends are for!

**Do what you like with the information I have given you but I urged you to just go for it. Be friendly, try everything, put yourself outside your comfort zone and do not look back.**