

My Field Report on Texas A&M International University



The best decision of my life so far describes my semester abroad at Texas A&M International University quite well. I experienced more in 5 months than I usually do in 5 years and had a unique semester with the most wonderful people. But how does it actually work in Laredo? I will gladly inform you about that in my field report.

The Beginning - Application & Preparation

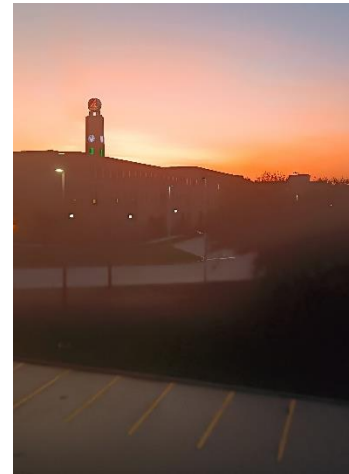
To apply to TAMIU, you will need to submit a few documents, including the TOEFL test. You can take the test online or at a test center. After you are accepted, the International Office of TAMIU will contact you and discuss all further details. The International Office has very kind staff and will be happy to answer any questions you may have. So always write if you have any questions!

The next steps are the visa application and the flight, to which I will come back later. Applying for the visa seems confusing at

first on the website, but once you have an appointment and are on site it is quite straightforward. As an exchange student, you can also easily apply for an express procedure to get an appointment faster.

Accommodation, Food & Courses

Some time before your arrival, the portal for room selection will be activated, here you can even look for a roommate. I was lucky and quickly found someone who became a very good friend during the semester. As an international student, you can only choose one of the two accommodations, the Residential Learning Community (RLC). I recommend choosing Sanchez Hall because the laundry room is right next to it. I chose the single room with a shared bathroom, which is also the most common. In your room, you will have a refrigerator with a freezer, as well as a microwave. Additionally, there is a lounge with a kitchen on each floor in each of the four buildings. On the grounds of the RLC is also a clubhouse, with a ping pong table, computer room, and more, as well as a pool, a volleyball court, and a basketball court. The only disadvantage is that the rent is much higher than in Frankfurt (Oder).



With the room in the RLC also comes an obligatory meal plan. I chose the 250 meals option, which is enough if you eat in your room from time to time or go out with friends. The meals are loaded onto your student ID and you can use them to go to the "Dusty Diner" 3 times a day. With the 250 meal plan you will receive credit on your card that you can use at Starbucks, Subway, and Chick-fil-A on campus.

Before you arrive you have to choose at least four courses. The academic level is a bit lower than at Viadrina, but the workload is much higher. Besides case studies and lectures, there are also tests and midterm exams during the semester. Of course, the amount of work varies depending on the course. In any case, you have less pressure at the end for the final exams. Of the courses I chose, I liked "Business, Govt&Society" the most.

Arrival in Laredo

Arriving by plane can be quite stressful, as the trip to Texas is not a short journey. Laredo has an airport, but you should check if it is cheaper to fly to San Antonio and take the bus. There is a Greyhound Bus between San Antonio and Laredo, which you will definitely get to know.

TAMIU offers a mentoring program for international students, which you will be informed about in advance. Your mentor will then pick you up at the airport or bus station and plan the next steps, such as moving into your accommodation. The mentoring program at TAMIU is generally very well organized and the mentors are really warm people who will help you at any time. Very quickly, the mentors also become friends for life.

In the first few days, the Dusty Camp starts, where all new students are introduced to the campus, student life, and the semester schedule. Here you will also have the opportunity to get to know the other international students and make further contacts with your future friends. After that, the first lectures will start soon, and the rest of the students will arrive at the dorms and on campus.



Campus Life, Everyday Life & Adventures

The campus of TAMIU is really nice and very well-equipped. There are also a lot of events, not only in the first week. I can highly recommend the events, especially since all the free merch is a great souvenir of your semester abroad! At the events, all student organizations and fraternities/sororities are usually represented, and you can learn more about them. There are also many sports activities and a well-equipped gym on campus. If you are interested, you can of course watch the games of the TAMIU teams in the indoor sports hall and on the sports fields.



In your free time, you will certainly explore Laredo, but you will have to rely on your friends with cars. Public transportation is almost non-existent. I have been to other cities besides Laredo. For example, we took weekend trips to the cities of Corpus Christi and San Antonio. Thanksgiving break also is suitable for a longer trip, for example, to Mexico. After the semester ends and your visa expires, you still have one month to leave the USA. Here you can take a road trip through the entire

state of Texas! The landscapes and cities are truly impressive, and you will sometimes feel like you are in a movie. But also, besides traveling you will have an eventful time in Laredo and a really exciting student life. Most fascinating and also similar to Frankfurt (Oder) is the strong cultural presence of the neighboring country. In the case of Laredo, of course, not Poland, but Mexico. The Mexican culture has a very big influence on Laredo, especially because of the many inhabitants with Mexican roots. Be prepared for Latin American music, breathtakingly delicious food, and an incredible number of kind-hearted people! With a semester abroad at TAMIU, you will definitely get a two-in-one deal with the Mexican and the American/Texan culture. Additionally, you will meet students from other states of the US, as well as from all over the world, and build international friendships.



Conclusion

I will never forget it! A memory for life that I will remember fondly forever. I strongly recommend a semester abroad at TAMIU, nothing more needs to be said. Once a Dustdevil, always a Dustdevil.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me! 🐼

And to round things off, here are a few pictures from the past few months:



Lake Casa Blanca in Laredo



Monterrey, Mexico



Fort Worth Stockyards



Big Bend National Park