

Report about my semester abroad at SDSU (fall 2017)

As the international student advisors explained, this report's purpose is mainly to serve future exchange students with information and recommendations about their upcoming semester abroad. Before getting deeper in to this matter, I would like to introduce myself briefly. I did my exchange semester as part of the master programme "Operations Management and Control" at SBS. At SDSU, I was enrolled in the MBA programme and took the classes *insurance management*, *statistics*, and *business economics*. Originally, I am from Germany. In the following, I will try to give you an overview regarding housing, social life, studying and transportation.

Housing. One of the biggest challenges of the whole semester welcomes you right at the beginning. Finding accommodation in San Diego is quite hard and you will likely be paying a lot more than in Stockholm – at least as long as you want to live in popular areas, like the beaches, close to SDSU, or Downtown. Also, the standards are not comparable with what people are used to in Sweden. I decided to live at the beach as most exchange students do. There is Pacific Beach, Mission Beach, and Ocean Beach. PB is where all the bars and clubs are, MB is in between the Bay and the Pacific (South of PB) and OB is even more South. At first, another exchange student and I tried to find a spot in PB with single rooms, which start somewhere between 1000-1250\$ a month. But this did not work out, and we ended up in MB in a shared room. Shared rooms begin from 600\$ upwards, depending on how lucky you are. We actually tried to find a spot already in advance, but we figured, it would be better to search while we are there. So, we booked an Airbnb for the first two weeks. My personal tip is, do not take the very first accommodation which comes up. The brokers are extremely good in making you feel like you have to take this now, otherwise you would never find something else. So, do take your time and also try to team up! Most of the apartments are perfect for four people and landlords feel better when they have already a bundle of four students that know each other. If you do not find someone from Stockholm, ask around in Uppsala or in Linköping. While we were five people sent from Stockholm University, there were forty from Linköping. By the way, accommodation at SDSU is as expensive as at the beaches. Retrospectively, MB was perfect for me. Until mid-November we always went to the beach, and when it got too chilly there, one could still lie at the bay. If you want to escape the exchange student vibe, consider Downtown or maybe even North Park or Hillcrest, which has more of a hipster scene and people also tend to be older (25+).

Social Life. San Diego as a city provides a countless number of opportunities to live your life. Also, SDSU has a huge range of events and activities to make friends. I have to say, I found it overwhelming in the beginning and I did not really know where to start and what to do. The offer was just too huge. They have a vast number of frats, social associations, sport clubs, art groups or music formations all offering events. If you find some of them interesting, I highly recommend getting involved in one of these, so you can get the true American college experience. Further they have many really cool sport events, which are not to be missed either. My recommendation is to make a plan beforehand about what you want to achieve and take out of your studies abroad. If you would like to improve your English and understand American culture, then it does not make sense to only hang out with Scandinavians while living in San Diego. If you just want to have a chill party semester close to the beaches, your decision might be different though.

Studying. As a master student from SBS you are obliged to take at least three master level classes, which add up to nine credit points at SDSU. If you decide to take one undergraduate course you have to take more classes in total, because SBS converts these into less ECTS points. I chose the three master level courses which I mentioned before, so I ended up having class only Mondays and Wednesdays. Overall, the workload was not that much, and I can confirm what many other exchange students from Europe say. It reminded me more to school than to uni: Loads of graded homework, class participation and presentations during the semester, which takes a bit away the importance of the finals. SDSU makes you to choose your courses way in advance, but it is easy to change and swap even in the first weeks after classes have started. My tip here, register for five classes in advance, go to as many classes in the first week and choose after you have seen all classes and all teachers. It might be hard to push yourself to do this in the first week, because you want to explore and do so many other things than being in school. However, I did not regret it, because I chose the three classes with the teachers that were kind, passionate and made it fun to go to their classes.

Transportation. The big question is, car or not. I went for the “not” and decided to commute to school, since it was only two days a week and it was a lot cheaper. However, if you find someone with a similar schedule, then renting a car could already be worth it. Most of my fellows rented it from dirt-cheap-car rentals which provides you a car to be used just in San Diego county. If you want to travel, they change the car to another one for an additional renting fee. I enjoyed using bus and trolley which gave me a bit of a San Diegian lifestyle. Still, I was told, there are times where it is not recommended to take the public transport lonely. I took it even at night and I have never had problems except for some pretty extraordinary conversations. When I was out, I used Uber or Lyft, which worked out just fine.

I hope this short report helps you and maybe you find one or the other tip supportive. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to shoot me an e-mail (thomas.oefler@t-online.de) and I can come back to you more specifically.

I hope you have a great time in San Diego! I am sure you will be having a blast!

All the best,
Tom