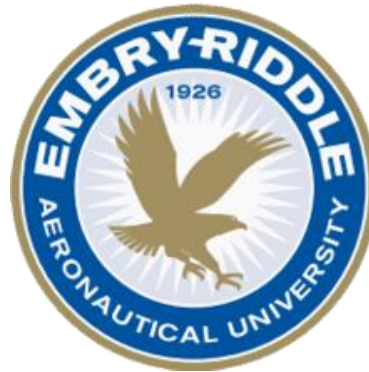


Experience Report
Exchange Semester Spring 2020
University of Applied Sciences Munich
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University



by

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Introduction

This report is about the experiences gained during the exchange spring semester 2020 at the Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. The information's given are about the academia, professional and cultural experience during the exchange.

The Exchange

Arrival and Departure

My exchange semester to the Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach started on the 28th of December 2019 with a flight from Munich International Airport to Orlando International Airport in Florida, USA. The flight ticket also included the return flight from MCO to MUC on the 21st of July 2020. The return flight got rescheduled twice from the airline and finally cancelled due to COVID-19. The final return to Munich, Germany was performed with an independent additional flight ticket and a departure from Boston, Massachusetts on the 1st September 2020. The additional transfer trip from Daytona Beach to Boston was done with a 23 hour / 2.400 km rental car drive within 2 days prior departure. The drive was combined with an afternoon visit and stay in Washington DC.

Reason for the early arrival in Daytona Beach before New Year's Eve was the search of a local accommodation for the semester and the better choice of rooms before the semester has started. Therefore, I booked an Airbnb room prior arrival and had several (10-15) viewings before deciding for an accommodation. Best marketplace was the ERAU accommodations Facebook group, an alternative possibility is www.craigslist.com.

Academia and Professional Experience

The introduction for exchange students was in the welcome week and was very effective to get information and some contact to other exchange or regular students. More contact to other American students happened for me during class, an exchange coordination student and within different university sport clubs.

The classes preselected from Germany were obsolete at the time I tried to register them at the university and I had to choose different ones. Generally, the classes for graduate students were fairly manageable, but use a lot of time for preparation, homework and the final papers. The classes were all taught in person upon till the global shut down from COVID-19 and were 3x 3hours per week plus ~20hours per week of homework. The classes were with my previous knowledge from the HM in Aerospace engineering manageable and taught me valuable information's, including the American point of view in regards to space technology and future US-goals. After the COVID-19 shutdown all classes moved from in-person to online and the university got closed completely for all students. The online classes caught most professors off guard without a plan how to process. Some professors doubled the workload for homework and other professors tried to be understandable and gave more time and less assignments. After all I completed all classes with success and achieved in all >92% (Grade A; 1,0).

The general support from the university towards foreign students was rather limited in regards to problem solving like VISA extensions due to travel restrictions and cancelled

return flights. But there was an exception, which was the exchange coordination office, which checked up monthly with every semester exchange student for solving personal non-VISA based issues and acted as emergency contact.

The campus experience and life at ERAU was very 'American' with a big student hall, flight department + ramp and sport complex. The university did before the COVID-19 pandemic an one-day career service where they invited around 80 aviation companies into their sports hall. They provided CV checks and application support for the students. Unfortunately, the most majority of the companies were airlines with no needs for developing aerospace engineers. Even if there was a favorable company, the company wasn't allowed to hire me because the jobs were military classified and only for US-citizen. Additionally, the hiring company has to proof to the government that there is no fitting US-citizen available for the open position and they also have to provide a sponsorship of several thousand dollars for the working VISA of the applicant. These hiring difficulties especially exist for bigger space companies/agencies like, NASA, SpaceX and BlueOrigin. This in mind there was little chance for me to find a fitting position. Additionally, the described procedure would be needed for every promotion/further job within the company and the US. But there are clearly other jobs in other areas that might be very appealing to other exchange students with less restrictions and no military classification jobs.

Personal Experience

Looking into the personal experience gained during my stay, it can clearly be stated that America has many different layers that were unknown for me. It was especially

impressive for me to get a deeper understanding for the divided political opinions and how this partially impacts their social life and tolerance towards each other. Daytona Beach in particular is a very republican city with all their benefits and drawbacks. This political position comes because of the historical location of Daytona and the influence of events like Bike Week and the Truck Meet. But this said every event has the advantage that Daytona has an always fluctuating number of tourists and different people to get to know. Also, it was interesting to see the social gap between campus and city, were on one side people spend several 10.000 \$ on cars, bikes, pilot licenses and private Cessna planes and on the other side people struggle to pay their bills and live without insurance.

With the experience and knowledge gained during the exchange and looking back, I would go to ERAU again. Furthermore, I would do most of the things I did again. The only thing I would change is to be more proactive at the beginning to have a bigger friend base from beginning on and do a few weekend trips to Miami. Personally, tough during the exchange semester was to keep the own finances in line, while enjoying Florida and activities with my new American friends.

Summary

In summary, the exchange to Embry Riddle Aeronautical University is a great opportunity for every foreign student to experience the American/Floridian culture within a few months. The stay gives a deep insight into the American student life at ERAU as well as the American way of life in Daytona Beach. The university's workload was manageable with prior knowledge and brought inspiring thought processes and views. All in all, I can just recommend an exchange to everyone with interest in aviation, space and America.

Appendix

