



Western Washington | Bellingham, USA

Fatima

Cultural Studies | Master Elementary School Teaching | 2. Subject Semester

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Western Washington University (WWU)

State University between Seattle (USA) and Vancouver (British Columbia). Located in the Pacific Northwest of Washington State.

The reason why I chose this university is specifically the geographical location which includes the nature, the sea and all the activities for hiking. Furthermore, it is close to the Canadian border which offers the opportunity to travel to Canada.

Bellingham

Bellingham is a small town in the north-west of Washington state with around 90.000 citizens. It is closely located to the Canadian boarder. Bellingham has beautiful nature with mountains like the popular Mount Baker and seas like the Boulevard Park. It offers the opportunity for adventures in hiking, paddling and biking.



One thing that definitely suprised me most was the kindndess and open-mindness of the people. Every bus driver and employee in grocery stores is greeting you and asking about your day.

Organisation

The day I arrived, I was picked up by my student advisor Karissa Ringel. She organized the transport from the station to my student apartment which was really helpful. After she picked me up, we went to the grocery store to buy some groceries and after that she dropped me off at Birnam Wood.

Together we took the keys and all other things for the apartment and finally she brought me to my room. From the moment I arrived in Bellingham I was supported by my advisor in every way, and the organization was excellent.



My writing skills and especially my speaking skills have improved enormously. Although my English was pretty good before the stay abroad, my speaking became more fluent and especially my word vocabulary has expanded significantly.

Akademische Eindrücke Academic Impressions

The classes were educational, both professionally and in general knowledge. Besides class topics, which were sometimes challenging as well, all teachers from the IEP classes allowed discussions about personal issues. They were not only teachers, but also people whom I could trust and who gave me the feeling that we could handle every situation together. We were like family. They taught me educationally and helped me in all cases. Our books and materials were accessible at the library at any time. We even had multiple excursions to the library and meetings with a librarian.

- Level 6 Academic Writing and Grammar
- Level 6 Topics in Academic Communication
- Level 6 Reading

The classes taught me to use my language at an academic level and to deal with academic texts. For me as a student, it was truly helpful to work more with academic texts, and to write term papers, especially since I am considering to write my master's thesis in English.



Soziale Integration Social Integration

WWU offered outdoor activities and clubs like the Hiking or German Club, which I attended, to connect with each other. The German Club was a special experience, and it was great to see how Americans are interested in German culture. One main factor that supported the social integration were the matches at Carver Gym. Together with other Internationals we went to various matches like Basketball, Volleyball, Soccer and Rugby. The matches were published on the Instagram profile.

Two of my roommates were Americans, and therefore I spent most of my time with them. Not only at home, but also in my freetime. Besides, we were a big group of International students mainly from Germany, Spain, France, Sweden and Japan which gave us the opportunity to connect and to spend our time all together.

Ihre „Werbeaktion“ für die TU Advertisement for TU Dortmund

During the International Education Week in November, I presented Germany for one day. My two German friends and I were asked to take over the Western Washington Instagram profile with my two friends for one day and additionally, I held a presentation about the German culture in the Global Lounge of College Hall. Here, I talked about the education system in Germany, and generally explained the class system at TU Dortmund university. I talked about programs and activities like Dortmund Doubles or the summer festival that takes place on campus every year.

Western Washington University | Bellingham, Washington



The takeover of the Instagram profile was very successful. Many students responded to our stories and we gave all of them the opportunity to ask questions about TU Dortmund in a question-answer session. American students have been very interested in our university system in Dortmund. You can find the whole story as a highlight at Western Washington's Instagram profile by clicking on the highlight "Global Ed".

Kultur Culture

One aspect that surprised and fascinated me at the same time, was the fact that everybody in Bellingham is greeting you. On Campus, in the grocery and even in the bus the people are asking you “Hey, how is it going?” or “Hey, how are you, how is you day?”. I was truly overwhelmed by the politeness of the people and even the bus driver is asking about your day. While leaving the bus, the bus driver always told me to take care of myself. I really appreciated it, and in time I myself started to ask people about their day and how life is going. It is a matter of greeting and showing respect towards people.



While eating every day in the Viking Common on Campus, I realized that almost all students came to dinner in their pyjamas and crocs. It is a common thing at Western that students come to dinner with pyjamas and crocs.

Sustainability

Hin- und Rückreise

My flight from Frankfurt to Seattle was very special. For me, it was the first long distance flight and the view over Alaska and Northern Canada was breathtaking. It was thrilling to see so many icebergs over a long period of time. Besides, I was lucky to talk to a very friendly stewardess to whom I could talk during the last hours. We talked about the flight, about Seattle, about the states and generally all the things she has experienced so far.

Nachhaltigkeit vor Ort

In Bellingham I took the bus and walked most of my time, which was very sustainable. The public transportation is very advanced, therefore it was not even necessary to take an uber or cab. One further thing that amazed me were the water dispensers, not only everywhere on campus, but in every grocery store and shopping mall. Furthermore, the boxing of food waste in restaurants was great because the food was not thrown away. This is one thing I would wish to see more in German restaurants.

Tipps und Vorschläge für zukünftige Studierende (Tips for future students)

- My biggest advice for students is not to be afraid to make the first step. Don't be inhibited to try out new things and don't be afraid to travel. Americans are one of the most friendly and lovely people I have met, and you will be in good hands. In Bellingham, I connected with other students very quickly. Bellingham is also called Bellinghome and the people I met there are family for me now.
- Spend your time properly and travel as much as you can. Washington has beautiful National parks, hiking spots, and generally it is famous for its beautiful and outstanding nature. Go to Seattle and to the beautiful neighbor state Oregon. Even Nevada is an amazing destination, and you can fly to Las Vegas from Seattle over a longer weekend.
- Consider that the USA is much more expensive than Germany. A grocery store in the US is twice as expensive as in Germany, and especially restaurant visits can be very costly.
- Next to the Joe and Anneliese Zauchner scholarship, I had no additional scholarships. My monthly budget was around 700 dollars, considering that I travelled to Canada and Nevada during my fall quarter.



Das Leben danach... (Life afterwards...)

My stay in the USA has taught me many things. I learned to rise above myself, to dare and try out new things and I even became more disciplined and self-confident. I was on my own for the first time in my life, I learned to make decisions wisely. Furthermore, I met so many new people, and I encountered new cultures and saw how different cultures live together.

I could definitely imagine living and working in the USA for a certain period of time. Besides, I am very grateful for the given chance and all the experiences I made during my fall quarter.



Western Washington University | Bellingham, Washington

Anything else?

- The fall quarter was a special quarter because of its various holidays. The absolute highlight was the Halloweekend because Halloween is a big deal in the USA. Generally, holidays are higher valued and more celebrated in the USA than in Germany.
- The holidays gave me the opportunity to travel to cities like Seattle, Vancouver (BC) and Las Vegas for a few days.
- After my stay in Bellingham, I travelled a further month. With my F1-Visa, I was granted additional 60 days for travelling after my stay at WWU. I took advantage of it and travelled to Hawaii, Los Angeles and to New York.
- Thanks to my great lecturers from the IEP classes, I was able to visit American High Schools and a primary school in Bellingham. It was great to be granted a short insight into the American school system. I was also able to visit a primary school on the reservation Lummi Nation and to drive to Lummi Island by ferry with my lecturer.



Western Washington University | Bellingham, Washington