



Western Washington University (WWU) | Bellingham,
USA

Janek

Chemistry, 11. Semester (after Graduation)

01.01.2022 – 16.03.2022



WWU Bellingham

Governmental university with broad education profile, mainly focused on undergrad (Bachelor) studies.

I participated in the Intensive English Program at WWU since...

... It allowed for a comparably easily arrangeable stay in the US.

... Has magnificent financial support opportunities owing to Zauchner Scholarship.

... Offered the possibility to gain abroad experience not focused on your study subject.

Bellingham, USA

Bellingham, located at the very north of the pacific coast, offers a very green environment with a variety of wildlife. You will experience both beautiful sunsets at the beach as well as stunning views from the Chuckanut mountains (Squamish overlook, oyster dome, ..).

After an about 90 min car ride you reach Mount Baker ski area, so make sure you bring your skiing clothes (winter quarter).



The weather is temperature-wise pretty similar to the weather in Germany. However, the beauty of the *evergreen state* has it's reasons in the frequent rainfalls.. You better bring a rain coat!

Huge amounts of snow are uncommon, although in 2022 I experienced them.

Organisation

You will most likely arrive at Seattle/Tacoma Airport and take a bus to Bellingham. The IEP staff will pick you up at the bus stop and bring you to your room.

Housing is arranged by the IEP. You will stay in apartments with three other people, with one of whom you will share your room. The Apartments have a kitchen, private bathroom, balcony and a quite large living room. Nothing luxury, but totally sufficient. Sharing a room is absolutely normal in American university housing (we're lucky in Germany). I got along with my room mate very well and didn't face major issues, don't worry too much!



Owing to the omnipresence, with special regards to native speakers your language skills will certainly improve.

This is especially true for everyday conversations. You will obtain a way more natural way of speaking which you hardly get from reading research literature or giving scientific presentations.

Akademische Eindrücke

I participated in the Intensive English Course which is meant to prepare students to study in English. The course offers levels 1-6. Even with rusty high school level English you will mostlikely end up in the highest level 6.

Depending on your English level you might have to challenge yourself a little above the course requirements. Big pro: the teachers are extremely flexible and value your interests and inputs. Make use of it and talk to them! They are as interested as you yourself in creating you an enriching stay with regards to both, language and personal development.

Within the highest level of the course, you are given the opportunity to participate in any course at WWU. Just contact the lecturer and most likely he/she is happy to welcome you to the lectures. Decide yourself whether you want to deepen your knowledge in your own field of expertise or whether you wanna get insights to new subjects.

As I participated in the program after my master graduation there was no need to claim any credits.

However, I assume that it might be difficult receive a many credits or will at least cause some organizational effort.



Owing to your housing situation you will definitely meet americans, same holds true for integration via clubs or sports (see right). Within the IEP you will, obviously, not be around americans but enjoy a diverse cultural mixture.

Soziale Integration

The IEP program arranged a couple of activities including bowling and skiing. Additionally, you receive more than enough information about several different clubs being active at the university. Topics include everything you can think of: culture, sports, language, religion, study related, activism, They usually have weekly activities.

If you want to join a sports team sign up for the intermurals seasons (non-professional university internal sports leagues). A variety of sports is offered and the seasons are arranged per quarter allowing you to participate. You can simply join a team and will meet new people.

Kultur

Many American clichés are true. Houses are arranged as shown in any American sitcom, cars are omnipresent and oversized, and soda is daily nutrition.

What is special: Get used to introduce yourself with your pronouns (he/his, she/her, they/their). Bellingham is a very progressive city, especially regarding gender diversity.

Generally, the population is predominantly white and American. You won't find the American *melting pot* which you may expect.



The American mindset and culture is a little different – yes. However, considering the broad picture it is very similar to the western European system. You don't have to be afraid of a culture shock.

Nachhaltigkeit

Hin- und Rückreise

Obviously, there is no way to get around flights to America. You can either depart from Frankfurt or Amsterdam and will arrive in Seattle/Tacoma Airport. Bellingham has a small domestic airport, but you will go by bus from Seattle to Bellingham. Possible companies are, among others, greyhound bus or Belair Airport shuttle. The Amtrack train from Seattle - Bellingham is neither economically nor time wise an attractive alternative.

Nachhaltigkeit vor Ort

With your student ID you have free transport with the local busses. During the day Birnam Wood (your residence area), campus and downtown are well connected a couple of times per hour. Google maps shows live location of the bus. In the night there is a starlight shuttle (on call bus) which picks you up and brings you to your residence for free. Be aware that it sometimes is very/too busy. For American Standard bike lines are well established and distances are short. It might be worth a thought, it's hilly though! Anyway, Uber will make your life easier once in a while.

Tipps und Vorschläge für zukünftige Studierende

- The Joe and Annelise Zauchner scholarship covers tuition fees, housing costs and includes a 100-meal plan for the dining halls plus so called dining dollars which you can use at starbucks, panda express, subway or the mini markets on campus. You will easily get along the plan and barely need to spend money on groceries (unless you want). The food in the dining halls is all you can/want to eat and of satisfying quality (mensa standard).
- What you have to pay your self is your journey to Bellingham and back home and cost for your activities. Buying return flights is significantly cheaper than booking them separately. Return flight start from around 400 \$, bus transfer 10 – 60 \$. Unfortunately, both extremely fluctuating dependent on your timing.
- Costs during your stay mainly depend travelling activities and expenses for going out. Low budget, far below 1000 \$ is definitely possible (considering Zauchner scholarship & excluding flight)

Tipps und Vorschläge für zukünftige Studierende

- The outdoor center organizes cheap trips, e.g. snowshoeing or skiing in winter. Check out the program for the upcoming quater and sign up quickly, the activites are booked out extremely quickly.
- On Western Wednesday BBG (Bellingham Bar and Grill) offers cheap drinks for students. The entrance in the Royals (club) is always free before 10 (Parties end at 2 am sharp and therefore start earlier)
- Try to make friends with someone who has a car. You will see and experience more.
- Don't focus too much on the academic part. Your language skills will develop at least equally good by surrounding yourself with native speakers and organizing any kind of activities in an English-speaking environment. The teachers will support by allowing you some flexibility for your personal development and great experience.



Das Leben danach...

The stay confirmed me wish to do my PhD abroad and facilitated the start in terms of social integration and work owing to a significantly lowered language barrier. Additionally, abroad stays always strongly contribute to your personal development. As I had quite some free time during my time this is especially true for this program. The stay helped to reflect attitudes and decisions even more and think of other perspectives. In any case, I became very clear how privileged we in the Germany academic education system are regarding study funding.