

# Final Life Report: Exchange Experience at the University of Florida

## Academic Experience

The University of Florida (UF) operates with a high level of organization and efficiency, ensuring that students have the best possible learning experience. The MBA program at the Warrington College of Business is structured to provide students with practical knowledge, exposure to real-world business cases, and an environment that fosters participation and critical thinking.

One of the most remarkable aspects of UF's teaching style is the emphasis on practical learning. Professors encourage active participation in class discussions. Many courses use the case study method, where students analyze real business scenarios and propose solutions, mirroring real-world business decision-making.

Another distinguishing factor is the way UF structures its semester. Unlike many other universities where the semester runs continuously for several months, UF divides its semester into two modules, each lasting approximately six to eight weeks. Initially, this system might seem overwhelming, as it appears to compress a large amount of content into a short period. However, as the semester progresses, students realize that this structure is highly effective. The pace keeps students focused and engaged while also allowing them to absorb and apply knowledge efficiently. The frequent assignments and projects help reinforce learning and ensure mastery of key concepts.

Professors at UF are strict about deadlines, which fosters discipline and time management among students. The best approach for MBA students is to complete tasks as they come, rather than postponing them. By staying on top of assignments, students can maintain a balanced schedule that includes attending classes, studying, and exploring Gainesville.

The flexibility in course scheduling and the variety of options, including multiple professors teaching the same subject in some cases, are other advantages for international students. The MBA program allows students to build their schedules in a way that optimizes learning while providing enough free time to experience life outside of academics.

UF's professors come from diverse backgrounds and ethnic origins. In addition to their expertise brings, this diversity brings a wealth of perspectives to the classroom. They excel in fostering an engaging learning environment, encouraging students to participate in discussions, ask questions, and share their insights. Additionally, they are approachable, with open office hours where students can seek guidance and clarification.

Overall, my academic experience at UF was enriching. The courses I took at UF aligned perfectly with my program at National Chengchi University (NCCU), which made it easy to transition. The

rigorous coursework, coupled with the practical teaching approach and structured schedule, provided me with valuable knowledge and skills that will benefit me in my future career.

## **Cultural Experience**

Gainesville is a peaceful city that offers a huge contrast to the business of larger metropolitan areas. Unlike cities like New York, where people are always in a rush, Gainesville has a relaxed pace of life. People are generally warm, and welcoming, and they often greet others with a smile. This atmosphere makes it easier for international students to integrate and feel at home.

One of Gainesville's biggest attractions is its natural beauty. The city is surrounded by many green areas, offering plenty options for outdoor enthusiasts. Some of the most popular natural sites include the Kanapaha Botanical Gardens, and the Devil's Den. For those who enjoy hiking, Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park offers trails where visitors can encounter wild animals such as deer, turtles, and even alligators. The Santa Fe River is known to be great for kayaking and canoeing experiences in a serene environment.

Beyond nature, Gainesville also has a rich cultural scene. The Florida Museum of Natural History and the Harn Museum of Art are excellent places to explore art, history, and science. Residents take pride in their city's heritage and often participate in community events that celebrate Gainesville's culture and history.

One of the most vibrant aspects of Gainesville's culture is its passion for football. The University of Florida's football team, the Florida Gators, has an enthusiastic fan base. Even though many residents admit that their team is not the best, they remain great supporters. On game days, the entire city transforms. People dress in the team's colors, gather hours before kickoff, and create an electrifying atmosphere. The Ben Hill Griffin Stadium, also known as "The Swamp," is filled with fans cheering for their team, regardless of the weather. Rain or shine, Gators fans are unwavering in their dedication. After the game, celebrations continue in various parts of the city, demonstrating the deep-rooted football culture that unites Gainesville's residents.

## **Notices and Advice for Future Students**

The NCCU's IMBA exchange programs provide an incredible opportunity to explore the world while pursuing higher education. They allow students to join a diverse community of peers from different backgrounds who share a common goal: to discover a new place, immerse themselves in a new culture, and build lifelong friendships.

Some may describe Gainesville as a quiet or uneventful city, but my experience was different. The perception of a place depends on one's mindset. If a student believes there is nothing to do, they may spend most of their time studying, assuming that they have no other options. However, an adventurous student will explore the city and uncover hidden gems, from nature trails and cultural

sites to social events and nightlife. Gainesville offers numerous distractions, including clubs, student-organized events, fraternity parties, and nature excursions.

One common concern is accessibility. Gainesville has only a regional airport, which some may view as inconvenient. However, its central location makes it easy to take quick trips by bus to major cities in Florida during long weekends and holidays. Taking advantage of these travel opportunities is highly recommended, as they allow students to explore more of the United States.

To strike a balance between academics and social life, my best advice is to develop strong time management skills. Completing assignments as early as possible and dedicating time each day to studying ensures that students can fully enjoy their exchange experience without falling behind in their coursework.

Overall, students should approach the exchange program with an open mind, curiosity, and a willingness to embrace new experiences. NCCU's exchange programs should be maintained and strengthened, as they allow students to appreciate the quality of education they receive while gaining valuable international exposure.

In conclusion, my time at UF was transformative, both academically and culturally. The exchange program offered me the chance to expand my horizons, build meaningful connections, and gain insights that will stay with me throughout my career. I highly encourage future students to take full advantage of this opportunity and make the most of their time at the University of Florida or any other university where they chose to go for exchange.