

# Purdue University - Fall 2018

A REVIEW BY FLORIAN UNGERECHTS

With the partnership program and the PROMOS scholarship I was lucky to spend the fall semester 2018/19 at Purdue University in West Lafayette Indiana. There I continued my studies in physics (5. semester) and explored the college life in the US. In this review I would like to share some tips and tricks, personal experience and give a little guidance for a study abroad at Purdue.

Let's start with some information I found useful before leaving. The most important advice was to start early and keep track of all the things you need to do. I'm sure you have heard this a lot but it can get a lot of paperwork and deadlines at some point so starting early helped me a lot.

The first thing you might have to deal with is the **application process at Purdue University**. During the online application you have to choose some courses you want to do at Purdue. But don't worry too much this is more of a reservation of your seat in the course and can still be changed later. The only problem that could occur is that your desired course is already full at a later time. For undergraduates there is a limit for the course numbers to be below 500 (500 000). Personally I had no problems changing my courses after my arrival with my academic advisor. I changed almost all of my courses and even to above 500 courses. For some courses I had to email the professors to get their approval since I was registered as a Freshmen and therefore didn't have the prerequisites. Most of them agreed and it was as simple as sending a 2-3 line email, so don't be afraid.

After my application at Purdue was accepted I was able to continue with getting a **Visa**. So I made an appointment online and went to the Embassy in Berlin (you can also go to Frankfurt). Be sure to make an appointment some weeks ahead of time if you want a specific date and time. I did so about 3 weeks ahead. They really don't allow anything else to take inside the embassy building than the documents, not even the bag I carried them in. So better don't bring anything. The Visa appointment was quick (2 min interview) and nothing to really worry about. The guy just asked me about where I go, what I study and wished me a nice time. The whole process at the embassy took me about 20 min but including the time for the trip to Berlin about a day. It took about 2 weeks to get my passport with the Visa and I finally was able to look for a **flight**. The airports nearest to Purdue are Chicago or Indianapolis. From there you can take a shuttle bus to campus. I booked my flight about 3 months before my departure and choose a direct flight with Lufthansa to Chicago (about 900€). The shuttle I took was Reindeer Shuttle (50\$). I can recommend both.

Another thing you want to do before you leave is check your immunizations and get a **health insurance**. Purdue requires you to have a health insurance covering your stay, you can either get one via the Purdue partner company or get a foreign health insurance with a German insurance company which satisfies the requirements for a waiver. In my case the foreign health insurance was cheaper and better. I had almost no problems with the waiver. Further Purdue requires you to have several **immunizations** with you can check on their website. Get the immunizations before you go abroad since they are very expensive in the US.

One of the most important things you want to think about is where you stay, **housing**. In general you can either live on or off campus. My choice was to live on campus which is a little more expensive but you are also closer to the lecture halls and can get a meal plan for the dining courts. Purdue on campus housing is split by genders. During the application process for Purdue I had to give a preference list of what kind of room I would like to have and Purdue later assigned me one accordingly. I stayed in Cary Quadrangle which is one of the largest dorms and male only. My room was quite nice I had one roommate, AC and heater and one of the larger rooms. If you are unlucky there are also very small, non-AC rooms in Cary nicknamed „closets“. Cary Quad is located next to the Ross Ade football stadium, the Mackey basketball arena and Ford Dining Court, Armstrong Hall of Engineering is across the street and most of the campus can be reached within a 15 min walk.

For **dining** there are several dining courts on campus which offer a variety of different foods every day. If you live on Campus you will get a **meal plan**, if not you can still pay at the entrance. Personally I choose the 13 meal track plan. The dining courts are „all you can eat“ like and having a meal twice a day was enough for me. The food is good but not great. For a little variety you can look up the menus online and go somewhere else. With your meal plan you will also get some amount of Dining Dollars which can be spend on cafes and restaurants around campus. Other than dining courts you will find plenty restaurants on Chancy Hill (15 min walk) or at PMU. There is a Walmart Supercenter approx. 10 min by car or 30 min by bus away. Cooking in the dorms is almost not possible, there was a very bad equipped Kitchenette featuring a microwave, an oven and a stove but not including anything like plates, knives or pans.

Lastly you might think about attending the orientation programs **Boiler Gold Rush (BGR)** and **Boiler Gold Rush International (BGRi)** . This is an orientation time for freshmen organized by the university. BGRi is especially for international freshmen students but also a lot of other exchange students participated. The orientation program is not free but in my opinion definitely worth it. It's a great chance to make friends from all around the world, get to know campus and have a lot of fun. Although the program might not be for everyone since it's a lot of activities and mostly younger people.

Being abroad the first days might be a little challenging and different from what you are used to. A few things might be helpful to know in advance.

**Arriving** at your room you will realize that the university dorms do not include pillows, blankets or bed sheets so you want to get them as soon as possible. You can get them for example at Walmart or Bed, Bath & Beyond. The BGR program included a trip to Bed, Bath & Beyond on the second day. You will also need to do some immigration paperwork with the University and get your student ID, the BGR advisors also helped us with that.

At first sight the campus seemed pretty big to me so here are some tips to **get around**. Most of the time I simply walked around campus, you can get pretty much everywhere within a 10-15 min walk. However the **public transportation** in West Lafayette and Lafayette is free for students and there are busses which go around campus and both cities. The frequency depends on the route but about 10-30 mins is common. I used the Lafayette CityBus app for schedules. An other option is to rent a bike or electric scooter (Bird). If you're going further something like Uber might be better. I used Lyft sometimes.

Be prepared to **study** differently! On the first day of classes you usually get a syllabus. This will be most useful to figure out what to expect. You will find lot of homework assignments, midterms and final exams. This means that you might have to adapt your style of studying. Purdue focuses a lot more on practice and assignments than I was used to. You will not only have a weekly load of homework to do but some tests and midterms every few weeks. So you really have to work the whole semester. Especially if you take graduate courses (course number >500) the homework will keep you busy. Even though I only took 4 courses with a total of 13 credits it was challenging to get all the work done. For **physics** I personally didn't like that they don't really do the math parts and focus more on the methods and general ideas. Other than that I can recommend the physics department. They have a great variety of courses and you will find similar ones to the courses at LUH. Try the undergraduate research course (PHYS 590)! You will be working with a professor of your choice on a little research project for the semester. For me this was really fun and I strongly recommend Prof. Lang and his group.

The University provides a great variety of **activities**. It has an awesome Sports Center (CoRec) where you can do all kinds of sports, including a gym for fitness and a swimming pool. As a student you can use the CoRec and rent the equipment for free. Further the University has a lot of student clubs with all kind of interests. This includes several programs for exchange students and internationals. I can recommend the PASSPORT, UR Global and the Global Science Partners clubs. Every club organizes some events throughout the semester e.g. dinners or trips. Some trips I can recommend are Turkey Run State Park and Lake Michigan.

Some pictures and Impressions:



Cary Quadrangle Building







Lake Michigan



Turkey Run State Park