

Saskatchewan
Land of Living Skies



- Thankful to study a term at Edwards School of Business, U of S -

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Introduction

I live in south Germany and study business with the focus of industrial service management at the DHBW Stuttgart and work all three months at the Deutsche Telekom AG. The university offers the opportunity for students to study semesters abroad, to gain another perspective of studying and experiencing another way of learning. Before I started my student career, I wanted to do a semester abroad. I have been in New Zealand for work and travel after high school, and already on the flight back to Germany I was 100% sure I wanted to gain another abroad experience, as there are so many possibilities to learn, improve and experience for both work and life in general through living in another country and culture. DHBW Stuttgart has connections to several universities in the world. I collected lots of information, talked with people, and figured out a list of countries I would like to go to, as well which are affordable. After a while, it was decided that I will go in my fourth semester to Saskatoon, Canada. As a look to the map shows, Saskatoon is in the middle of nowhere, in the province Saskatchewan. The province is three times as big as Germany, so it has a lot to explore. I did not even travel at all to the north of the region. People who live in this province have this phrase that Saskatchewan is easy to draw (it is just a square), but hard to say. The next bigger cities are a couple of hours away. But I learned and have the motto, that it does not depend on the place if you like it or not, it depends more on the people you meet and your experience you gain in this place if you like a place. I was more than happy and so excited to explore Saskatoon. I also thought it would be great because I probably would have never gone there for vacation. Why not go there for studying, experience a new culture, and learn from another lifestyle. The University of Saskatchewan (U of S), has different colleges, and I went to Edwards School of Business. Edwards is one of the top recognized business schools. It is an accredited business school which gives worldwide recognition!



My semester started in the coldest time of the year, in January. The average temperatures in January and February are around -20 degrees. These temperatures are not normal in Germany, so I prepared myself with warm winter clothes and was so excited to experience the winter in Canada. Over the whole semester in Canada, I was very often asked why I chose Saskatoon and why did I come in the coldest months of the year, and everybody told me that the summer is so much better. On the one hand, I did not have a choice in which semester I go, but on the other hand, I thought it would be a great experience to get to know the Canadian winter. It is just sad that I could not stay in the summer and compare it with the winter. Because it turned out that I loved the winter, how much better would be the summer and autumn, as everybody said?!



When I arrived in January, it was not too cold; it was around -15 degrees and I got easily used to the coldness. But a few weeks after my arrival, it turned out that the temperatures got lower and lower. It started with degrees around -40, and on the next day, it was +4 degrees. It was crazy how the temperatures changed. But it became colder and colder, and Saskatoon was for a while the coldest place on earth and even colder than the planet, Mars. We felt around -53 degrees. This coldness stayed for weeks, and it was the coldest winter for a long time in Saskatoon. By the way, in these areas, you do not use the word minus in front of the degree, because it is official that you talk about minus degrees at this time of the year. In the summer, it becomes the opposite, and it becomes around plus 30-35 degrees. People who have never lived in this coldness cannot imagine how cold it is. It is immense, and if you do not dress up correctly, you can get frost bite in a concise period. It was cold, and everybody tried to stay inside, but these cold temperatures offer new opportunities, and the sun was always shining! It was possible to get a sunburn and frostbites at the same time! As not many people like this cold weather, it was hard to find people to go outside to explore a little bit of the

surroundings. Sometimes I could motivate friends to go outside. But mostly Canadian friends, because most international students were just not prepared enough for the coldness or were not interested. This turned out that I spend much more time with Canadian friends, which was amazing, because they know the area and could show me a lot. I remember the first time when I drove with a friend in their car. I was excited like a child and tried to hide it. Because it was a huge truck, which we just do not have in Germany and I was so happy to sit so high in a truck and have a view over all little cars on the streets. Sometimes Canadian friends even excused that they just drive a truck and no fancy car, but I loved it.

University of Saskatchewan (U of S) – study time

My student life was different than in Germany, and in the beginning, it took me a while to get used to it. The campus was huge compared to my home university. The U of S has more than 24,000 students that are part of different colleges. A great part at U of S: it is possible to change buildings without getting outside. The whole university is connected by tunnels. Even after one semester, I did not know all the tunnels, because there are so many. I lived 10 minutes' walk from the university building in the College Quarter, that is part of the university residence. Here I shared a flat with two other Canadians. There are lots of options to live on campus or close by.



All university buildings are built in a circle, and in the middle of it is a big green area called The Bowl. In the summertime, people hang out together, play music, or play sports like Spikeball. In the winter there is an ice rink for ice skating in the middle of the university park. Each student can borrow skates for free at the PAC. The PAC is the sports centre of the University, which includes a fitness area, swimming pool, running area and some halls for team sports. In the beginning, it was possible to register as teams or as individuals for team sports. I built up a Volleyball team in just a few hours, which was great. My team and I had a match each Monday against other university teams. It was fun to play, and we improved our knowledge about other cultures and the different behaviour at sports games.

In Germany, I have eight hours of school almost every day and lots of different subjects, which I cannot choose for the most part. It was quite the opposite in Canada. I just had four subjects, but those had lots of workloads. It is a different concept. I had each subject twice a week. Each week, I either had deadlines for assignments, or I had midterms or projects to work on with other students. The workload was immense compared to Germany. I had lots of 3rd-year level courses while I am only in my second year in Germany. But I should add that in Canada students go to university for four years instead of three in Germany. I am even glad that my German instructor forced me to take 3rd level classes. I liked these classes a lot more than my 2nd-year classes. The third-year students were more willing to network and are already used to the university and willing to cooperate. The 2nd year lesson was kind of a basic lesson, and mostly the teacher just talked. In the 3rd year classes, the lessons are more interactive, discussions and projects are commonplace, and unquestionably the level is higher and more sophisticated. Third year classes also begin to apply a more detailed and specialized approach. It covers more specific material on certain subjects and shows how to apply that material in a practical way.

Another big difference is that there is always something going on at the U of S. PAWS, is the online platform for all students, with all important information and class materials. It also informs about events from U of S or deadlines, volunteer opportunities, competitions and much more. Each student knows the “Arts tunnel.” It is the tunnel from the main building to the Arts and Science building, that

a lot of students cross on their ways to other colleges. Almost every day, something is going on in the tunnel, either stands that do marketing for their association, or baking sales or other promotions. Furthermore, the university and as well each college has different associations and clubs.

There are lots more differences between the German university, DHBW Stuttgart and the University of Saskatchewan. I would like to share also some of my personal everyday experience at the U of S/ Edwards School of Business.

Personal experience at the U of S/ Edwards School of Business

Overall, I quickly became involved in a lot of things and did not feel like an exchange student, I felt more home, like a regular student. I knew teachers and students, and they knew me. I am glad that my Canadian friends showed me a lot in the university, either it was new tunnels or new study lounges or another Tim Hortons, lots of days I got to know something new at the university. This really helped me to feel comfortable and I even showed those new things to other international students.

While I did not know anybody in the beginning, I soon knew some people in each class, and further, I got involved in the finance association and met more people and participated in a marketing challenge. Friends took me to some events of Edwards School of Business. All over the semester, I met lots of people and had for this short time of one term, a great network. I even knew some people from other colleges and met people again who have been in Germany a few months before with an excursion of Edwards, where I joined them at a workshop. This connection was already beneficial before because I could ask them everything that I wanted to know before I flew to Saskatoon.

This semester confirmed again, my encouragement:

“Communication, openness, willingness, encourage, and curiosity are often the door for getting involved in things and being part of it.”

While it took me a little bit of time to get used to everything in the beginning, I was glad that I met in the first week one of my best Canadian friends. I was so thankful as my friends showed me a lot, how the expectations in classes are, how everything works, and some other practical advice. For example, how to win a free coffee at Tim Hortons and how to find the shortest Tim Hortons line and find the quickest ways to go through the thousands of tunnels.

While four courses might seem like less work, it required lots of effort. I was often in the library studying till late with friends. We had several assignments, quizzes, hand-in cases, midterms, projects, and at the end, finals. Even if it was lots of work, it was worth it, and I liked it! Through the enduring requirements, we are forced to repeat the material and practiced it more and more. Furthermore, I had in each lecture a book to get more information, and the teachers often taught us real-world examples, to understand more the content and the importance of the theories. I already can agree that I used some methods I learned at my current internship.

I spent most of the whole day at the university, but there were breaks included to meet up friends, so it was not too bad to study a lot, because everybody must go through this process and has to work hard. Primarily when I studied in the student lounge, I would meet other friends, or I arranged to meet with friends in the law library often because it was usually quiet and great to study. There are also pianos in some buildings of the university in some entrance areas. In the beginning, I tried to refresh my knowledge and started playing again for a bit. Mostly somebody played the piano, and you can hear it already from far and gave such a positive atmosphere at the university.

Next, to the amount of studying, I participated with other students on the marketing challenge. At this challenge, we got a budget and provided the marketing for the Rush game (lacrosse game). At the end of the term, we had to present our marketing strategies and won the second prize. During the semester were several “lunch and learns” or “speaker nights” organized by different business associations. They

provide different lunches (or suppers) to the busy students and organize the speakers for students who attend during their lunch or supper breaks! These events provide students with the opportunity to gain knowledge and perspective from outside mentors on the field of business and their experience in specialized topics. One of the best speakers I listened to was Kevin Peesker, president of Microsoft Canada. He talked about digitalization, IoT, and artificial intelligence in Canada and the world.

I participated in the finance association. For example, we offered a few speaker nights and “March Madness.” “March Madness” is something very American/ Canadian. People could buy \$5 tickets at our ticket-sales-table in Edwards School of Business. Participants bet on the winner of the playoffs from Basketball and whoever bets best, wins money. It was lots of fun to sell those tickets. It was also almost every week something on the floors of Edwards or in Arts tunnel that people sold something or made any advertising.

Other examples of study breaks (but not learning breaks) were “trivia nights”. Once I have been with friends at one for marketing and the other time about the world, made for internationals and Canadians who go abroad for a semester. It was a great way for Canadians to network with us internationals, to get to know people, depending on where they want to study abroad.

At the beginning of the semester, there were lots of Case studies offered from Edwards School of Business, which are business cases in different majors. Those events took place over a whole day. I did not participate unfortunately but would do it next time, as it is a great learning experience and an excellent way to meet new people.

Next to the volleyball games every week, my sports activities varied a bit. I sometimes helped another volleyball team out, went to some fitness classes, and loved to go rock climbing with friends in the PAC. I even had a conversation with the volleyball coach of the university team to start there, which was almost possible — hoping for the next time as the team of the university plays against other universities in Canada.



As a typical student in North America, you support the sports teams of the university. Especially in the first part of the semester, we often went to Basketball, Volleyball, or ice hockey games. It is more an event to meet friends and support next to it as well the sport teams. When the season of the university sport events was almost over, the Rush game (national lacrosse games) became a significant sport events as well on the weekends. In the summer and autumn time rugby, games take place, which I unfortunately missed.

After a few months living in Saskatoon, I mostly met the people who I knew when I took the bus or walked to university. It gave the feeling of being home and being part of Saskatoon. To build a network over the whole time was not always easy and needed a lot of effort but was a big successful part in my abroad semester and opened new options.

Even networking is a big thing, especially at Edwards, and people always ask how you are and are friendly, it seems not that hard to meet people to me. I am even more thankful to find real friends, which is another significant step to go through, that I happily did successfully and think some of my new friends are even lifetime friends.

Courses

It is the first time that I could choose by myself the classes that sound most interesting to me. Admittedly, I had to confirm it with my German instructor. But as U of S offers lots of courses, I had some options. It was not an easy and fast decision. It was hard, and it took time, but it was worth the time I invested in the selection because that matters if you enjoy the courses or it is just a hassle to go to lectures daily. Most classes have a book for the lecture, but it is not always necessary. New books are expensive (over \$100/200 sometimes). I can recommend talking with the teacher if it is required to

buy a new book or if buying a used/older version be enough. Sometimes teachers use a onetime use code for some class tests that are in the book, but it is possible to buy it extra. Luckily, this was not the case in my chosen lectures. I list the courses I took and give some further information about other courses and in general that I got to know from other students. Rate my professors (<https://www.ratemyprofessors.com/>) is an excellent homepage to look up some professors and read students impressions.

COMM 203 – Introduction in Finance (by Rhan Zang)

- Workload: three assignments, two midterms, one final
- Book can be helpful (recommend)

→ Maybe I would just recommend COMM 203 with another teacher. Brian Lane is a good teacher and is recommended. Also, I heard from other students that Personal Finance (COMM 329 or 429), is a good lecture.

COMM 342 – Organizational Structure and Design (by Marc Mentzer)

- Workload: two assignments, one quiz, one midterm, one final
- Book is necessary, but a used one is enough

→ I recommend this course, and Marc as a teacher is nice as well!! It was always fun, and the lecture was diversified. The course teaches a lot about culture and organizations.

COMM 348 – Leadership (by Rosemary Venne)

- Work load: two assignments, one hand-in case, one quiz, one group project, one final
- Book can be helpful (would get it again and a used one is enough), as well the reading package is necessary (\$3 in bookstore)

→ I recommend this course and Rosemary as a teacher as well!! When you like to lead and do teamwork, that's a great course to learn more about!

ECO 354 – International Trade (by Joel Bruneau)

- Workload: seven assignments, two midterms, one final
- Book is not necessary

→ I can recommend this course and Joel as a teacher as well!! This course was probably the best economic course I took so far in my student career, even there were weekly assignments. It was interesting, and we learnt a lot.

All teachers have weekly office hours and students can drop by for questions. Most teachers are helpful and friendly and are willing that students understand the context. Most professors want to know how the students do in their classes and want the best for them. But the students have to show the effort and the willingness to learn. Students get a feeling how the construct of finals will be through the midterms ahead.

Most 1st and 2nd year courses provide an overview, while 3rd and 4th-year courses get more rooted in the material, and it is more about understanding behind the theory. I would not recommend, if not necessary, first (or second) year classes, as most students must get used to university and it is more about memorizing and getting an overview. The introduction classes for the majors (Intro finance, Intro HR, ...) are mostly more or less an overview and do not go deep in the material either, and it is lots of memorizing too.

COMM 447 is a special course that students either love or hate but have to take. Students have to do a business case either by themselves or with a work partner. It involves most majors and is practical implementation. It sounds anyway interesting to me, because all majors are covered, and students practice all majors along a real-world case.

There are lots of more interesting courses, and I could quickly fill another semester with interesting and useful lectures. Further courses that sound interesting to me or I got recommended through friends: Personal Finance (COMM 329 or 429), International Business COMM 340), Sales Management (COMM 358) and some more.

Leisure Time

It was not always easy to accommodate a little bit of leisure time during studying, but each situation teaches you something. Nevertheless, I got to know a lot during this semester when I took a study break, but there is still much more to explore and to experience. The international office offered several events for international students. Some of the events that I joined: scavenger hunt through the university tunnel system, learning to curl (it is a typical sport in Canada), cooking Bannock (traditional bread made by the Aboriginal people) and join the Swale walk (walk outside of Saskatoon, with a guide who talked about the area).

Further, I got to know different neighbourhoods in the city through friends that invited me to BBQ and potluck dinners. These were sometimes interesting, while I experienced the axe throwing and tasting bear sausage that a friend hunted. Axe throwing is a Canadian activity with friends and in Saskatoon, there is a new bar that offers it. But I guess it was way better to experience it with Canadians in the front garden instead of paying for the tourist attraction in a bar.

Through the marketing challenge, I got a season ticket for the Saskatchewan Rush games. These games are huge events in Saskatoon and have a lot of hype around them. While I watched some games, my team and I supported the photo booth that we organized through our marketing.



I was so happy that I could experience lots from the Canadian lifestyle. In the first few weeks, many cities offer winter festivals, and I have been to ones in Saskatoon and Prince Albert. The winter festival in Prince Albert had a lot to offer. There were several husky races to watch, as well as possibilities to go for a circuit on a husky slide and a horse sleigh that was the alternative to walk from the husky race to the other show stage. The show stage was an amazing experience too. It is almost impossible to describe it; it must be experienced. The show master was a guy how you imagine an old man from the Arctic circle, really cool. Most people watched the show from their cars around, because it was -40 degree outside, and we were one of the only ones who watched it outside on a bench in the sun. The competitors had different tasks, for example, they had to do axe throwing, and sawing some wood, bringing water to cook and some other survival tasks. It was an exciting day out, surrounded by indigenous and other Canadian people. The winter festival in Saskatoon was different, it was on the day of the Chinese New Year, so there was some performance from Chinese people, but also an ice sculpture contest, a snow castle and other outdoor things to explore.

Most people know the dead sea in Israel. But who knows that Saskatchewan has a Salt Lake as well!?!? As it was still cold in April, we could not go swimming in the lake, but the swimming pool next to it has the same water of the lake. It was quite cool to float on the top of the water like in the dead sea of Israel. The town of the Salt Lake, Manitou beach, has a world-famous Dancehall. This would be for another semester in Saskatoon for sure on my budget list. The hall was built in 1928 and bands still play live music, and everybody can come to dance on weekends, it shows a flair of origin.

Saskatoon, the city in the middle of nowhere, even has some fantastic beaches. While the snow began to melt, I started going with friends to the beach. I first thought they are joking; how can you have a beach in the middle of the country, and my expectations were low. But I was more than impressed, the beaches on the river were amazing, it was just a little bit of a pity that the water was still cold, and we could not go for a swim.



One of my highlights was to go ice fishing with some friends on their lake. In Saskatchewan, there are more lakes than anywhere in the world. And people who have a cabin on a lake, have mostly this saying “going to my lake,” instead of saying the original name of the lake, because there are so many, and people do not know the names of all lakes anyways. In the winter all the lakes are frozen, and it is possible to walk on those, and other activities are possible as compared to the summer.

I had amazing experiences and enjoyed and appreciated all the possibilities I got. I am thankful for the people I met and who shared with me those experiences and adventures. To experience a sweat lodge, a tradition of indigenous people will be still on my budget list. Even Saskatoon seems to be in the middle of nowhere, there is, lots to explore, and one semester was not enough!

All in all, it is possible to do lots of “Canadian” experience with a tour provider during vacations, but it is always way better to experience it with locals and share the experience. Tourist providers always form it for tourists, and it is not that locally-minded and original. I am so thankful to meet so many people during my term in Saskatoon and to make so many good friends. I wish I would get another option to study the next term in autumn there, to continue my study and life experience and gain more through it for work and life.

Culture and impressions



Saskatoon is pretty much in the centre of Canada. Sometimes the clichés were true. Some people still dress up like in the wild west. Some boys go with cowboy boots, hats and plaid shirts to the University and to AG night. AG night is a student party at “The Longbranch,” where mostly agriculture students go there as they get discounts, and the main music is country music, so people dance the two-step and the line dance. Luckily it is quite easy to learn the main steps of those dances, and over time, I was able to dance even some figures.

I once got invited with other friends to a rodeo farm. That was the most “wild west” experience. A Canadian friend picked us up in the morning with a hockey bus, and we (10 people) drove to their farm. We got warmly welcomed by the parents and had a pancake breakfast together. Afterward, we continued to the aunt’s farm, and we all rode a horse. Even I am not a horse fan; I gave it a try to ride on one of these horses. Probably I would not ride a horse soon again... It was at least a great experience, which I will not forget.



Saskatoon has its’ own famous Saskatoon berries, and they are so delicious and grow just in the prairie. Saskatchewan is flat, and there is a phrase that you can see your dog running away for days, because it is so flat, and you see so wide. It is the country of living skies. But as not many people know, Saskatchewan has also some hills in the south of the province (e.g. Saskatchewan landing Provincial park).

There was another crazy thing I experienced. In a way, Canadians can have two identities. They can be formal in university, and at the business school, it is not strange to show up in a suit and a tie and on the next day in a regular sweater and still behave like formal and have a business behavior.

Furthermore, on the weekend, they can turn out like an outdoor person, catch fishes, and know how to filet them. In Canada when you want to do business with another company, the salespeople often invite the customer for playing golf or anything, and when the conversation was excellent, and the people came along, this contract becomes more preferred than a company that has maybe a better product but is not that interactive.

Canadians and especially prairie people use the slang “eh” at the end of a sentence; I picked it up quick and foreigner asked sometimes from which province I am. For example: “Isn’t nice weather today, eh?”

I could continue for pages but will conclude and show the benefits I took from this term in Saskatoon.

Conclusion and Benefits

All in all, my abroad semester in Saskatoon was successful, and I am happy for the opportunity to experience the classical American/Canadian movie student life. Even it is not always perfect like in a movie, each situation and each challenge taught me something. I got the opportunity to get to know another culture and widen my horizon and my understanding of the world. I improved my English a bit and am so proud when people tell me that they do not hear of my accent that I am from Germany. My English is still not perfect, especially my vocabulary and the grammar I can even improve immensely. I thought my English would be perfect when I am back in Europe, but it is not, there is still space to reduce the language barrier, a reason to do another semester abroad, if it is possible.

I learned at the university a lot and noticed in the first week of work back in Europa that theories that I learned in Canada at the U of S are used at work. But furthermore, because there are so many learning events offered, it was even learning more than just the material in the lectures. It gives options to get to know other people and learn from each other.

Even though the workload of the lectures was immense, and there were several grades throughout the semester, it was great. Because it forces students to repeat the material over and over to remember the context always. I liked this concept; even it was more workload because it is efficient. It would be great to continue another term in Saskatoon to widen my knowledge through lectures and continue the association and experience some other U of S and Edwards events.

In the past, I was already a friendly person, but I reflect that I learned to be even more welcoming and polite in Canada. Canadians say ‘sorry’ 1000 times a day, even they do not have to; they say sorry. Even when the other person is supposed to excuse, both persons probably say sorry. Also, welcome and thank you, I especially note some peoples’ behaviour that they show the appreciation deeply and with awareness. Somehow it overflows to me, and I behaved as friendly as an overfriendly Canadian with tons of “sorry” and “thank you” and “your welcome.” It is so lovely to get a real apprenticeship, and it presents more awareness.

Next, to the cultural experience and the traditions, it was great to see another country. When I and friends did an “after study trip” for a few hours out of town, it shows how spread out the country is



and helps to understand more about. It might seem just fun to travel around. But it teaches a lot as well!! While other people went to the zoo to see Canadian animals, I just drove with friend’s through the prairie and saw the wildlife next to roads, fields or walks. If I would get another chance for the fall term, maybe some friends would take me to their hunt. Further, I learned how the people lived outside of big cities. It was sometimes a real adventure.

In some rural areas are lots of old farmhouses that almost fall apart. But nobody cares about it because there is still so much space. Further, as not many people live in the prairies, the public transport is bad. Just bigger cities have public bus transportation. The busses do not run from one town to another one. The train is also not much better, while they have a train from coast to coast. The train sometimes stops even for just one person, in towns where only five houses are. But the train is used more often for goods and lots of cities have granaries along the train track.

With thinking of globalization and networks around the world, there are lots of differences to other countries. People still live without internet in some rural areas and must walk or drive to other towns to go grocery shopping. Further, those supermarkets do not get daily deliveries, and have not many offers, sometimes just some rest supplies. In the north of the province, some areas are only accessible by flying in or taking the waterway because there are no streets to some towns.

Those trips out of town, are on one side part of exploring a new area and on the other hand, part of learning. Canada is an industrial country, but depending on the regions, people still live differently. Not long ago, people just had rainwater on their farms instead of running water. There are several differences, different thinking is needed, and there is still tons to improve and develop.

Travel is the best education.

I am thankful to get the excellent education of Edwards School of Business, and a few times the option to travel a bit out of town. Those abroad semesters take a massive part of improving to be a good employee and teach even more than just a regular semester in the home country. Further, the lectures and further university events show a lot and improve knowledge and education. Beyond that spending time with Canadian students gives an understanding of another culture. Learning from each other and other cultures can help to understand work colleagues, suppliers or demander from different countries later on in life. It would be amazing to go back to improve these learnings more and get more understanding for Canada, a modern state, that is not industrial everywhere.

It would be amazing to experience the other half of the year, which is supposed to be totally different and gain some new experiences and tell my Canadian friends “Yes, I am allowed to come back for another term” to improve skills and learn more for my career at Deutsche Telekom AG/ T-Systems International GmbH.

