Major/Minor: Business Economics
Country: México Program: UNAM Mexico City Term & Year Abroad: 08-08 yr

*What type of student should go on this program (ex: personality traits, major, etc)?
Mature, self-motivated, and very independent students who are achieving majors in any of the Sciences, Spanish, and Engineering focuses should participate in this program.

Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
Most professors’ interactive teaching approach differed to UCSB instructors because there was a larger enfasis on one-on-one communication between instructors and students.
- Could you call them by their first names?
Very few instructors were comfortable with an informal setting such as referring to them by their first name. The majority of instructors follow strict professional etiquette.
- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
The student/instructor relationships at both institutions are just about the same in formality. An instructor must be approached with respect.
- Were they available for help during office hours?
Yes. All instructors had office hours or some sort of equivalent so that the students can reach them.

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
I viewed some courses as much more intense than at UCSB, but the material covered was far more advanced than my knowledge at the moment (i.e. I took my first Accounting course in UNAM: International Accounting based on Local and International Norms).
- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
Grading was completely different. In UNAM grades are given on a scale from 0 to 10 which slightly alters the “translation” of what an A/A- could be.
- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
Several classes required no midterms and just one final or one final project.
- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
In certain discussion courses, exams were usually oral. Although, the majority of exams were written.
- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
I noticed that students who maintained a good relationship with their instructor were permitted a flexible final exam schedule.
- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
I received academic support directly through my instructors, exchange coordinator, and helpful colleagues.
- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
Absolutely. I had to take an extra step forward all the time by organizing myself and not staying behind in anything.
- Was classroom participation expected?
Final grades in several classes were weighted heavily on participation in class.
- How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?
I was able to take several administration-related courses that are not offered at UCSB, most of which were global-oriented.

- **Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?**
  As an exchange student, I was allowed to choose any class which at the College was available from Freshman to Senior standing. First-year courses were usually beginning at 7am and finishing at 1pm. 3rd and 4th year courses were usually held later, beginning at 10am.

- **What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?**
  1st and 2nd year classes tended to have less obedient and more disrespectful crowds of students. They were commonly distracting others and interrupting lectures. 3rd and 4th year courses were typically full of true adults. Eating/drinking was not allowed in the classroom. Depending on the instructor, punctuality was not always a huge issue. Some instructors would arrive 10-15 minutes late.

**Language**

- **In which languages were the courses offered?**
  Spanish.

- **What language did you take your courses in?**
  Spanish.

- **If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.**
  Advanced courses touching topics that I wasn’t previously familiar with were my particular challenge. My first semester abroad was the most difficult getting used to, there was a lot of terminology I was completely lost about. Certain words which I didn’t know an official translation to like PowerPoints (Gráfica), In-class presentation (Exposición), etc.

**Host University**

- **How large is the university? Student enrollment and approx campus size (smaller than UCSB)? Is it an urban campus with many tall buildings or just a few building?**
  The university is enormous, without exaggeration. There are free buses that allow students to travel from college to college, different sports and recreational fields, theatres, museums, libraries, etc. The university is a city in itself, correctly titled Ciudad Universitaria.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?**
  On-campus residences don’t exist, all independent students (usually graduates or exchange) live in close approximation to the Ciudad Universitaria. The majority of students live at home.

- **If not located in the city center,**
  - **How far or close is it to the city?**
    It is about 15 minutes (without traffic, by car) from downtown.

  - **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?**
    On occasion (or when rushed) I would take taxis. Although the majority of the time the most accessible and economic sources of transportation were public methods such as the bus (micro, combi), metrobus, and the metro.

  - **Could students take cabs -cost?**
    Yes. The starting flat rate for safe, private cabs usually began at 8 pesos and would increase based on time and distance.

  - **How long would it take to get to the city center?**
    Depending on what time of the day it was, it could range anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour and a half.

- **Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?**
Each college sponsored different programs and organizations, but not very many clubs existed (or at least in the organized fashion that UC clubs begin).

- **Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?**
There are several bookstores on campus. Each college has its own. There are also plenty of bookstores outside in the surrounding C.U. areas. I usually searched for new editions on-campus and literature or other miscellaneous titles at local bookstores.

- **Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?**
There is a computer lab specifically for exchange students, along with computer labs specific to each college. Students very rarely bring laptops to class (I was usually 1 of 2-5).

- **What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)**
A plethora of cafes, stores, restaurants, cyber-cafes, coffee shops, printing shops, and mini-marts surround C.U.

**Housing**
- **What types of accommodations are available to UC students?**
Apartments selected and guaranteed by UC are available, as well as host families.

- **How close are they to campus?**
Apartments are usually 5 blocks to 3 miles away from campus.

- **How did you find your housing?**
I selected to be placed in a university-selected apartment. My Study Center provided information about that the day of my arrival.

- **Where did you live and with whom?**
I shared an apartment my first semester with 3 other UC students also studying at UNAM.

- **If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?**
When I moved away from the area to my own apartment it was not difficult at all. The challenging part was finding an affordable place that was also furnished.

- **Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?**
The apartment chosen by UC was about the same quality as IV apartments. The apartment I selected my second semester was better quality than a usual IV apartment or UCSB dorm.

- **Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?**
Near C.U. was a bit more affordable than I.V. pricing. Away from C.U. was significantly more affordable than I.V. Typical rent near C.U. ranged from $250 for one single (shared apartment) to about $400.

- **How/who did you pay for housing?**
We paid our landlady directly for our monthly rent.

**Food**
- **What was the food like?**
Lots of fried dishes, pork, and beef. Most entrées consisted of regional cuisine with an accompaniment of rice, beans, steamed sweet onions, cooked cactus, soup or potatoes.

- **Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?**
When on campus, I would usually eat at the nearest cafe or restaurant (immediately neighboring C.U.).
- **How much was an average meal?**
  Significantly more affordable than in the U.S. A complete meal with drink and dessert could range from $4-7.

- **What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?**
  Lunch was usually at about noon to 1pm. Dinner tended to be later than in the U.S., from 7-9pm.

- **Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?**
  No. Two of my housemates were vegetarian and seemed to get around pretty well.

**Travel/Safety**

- **If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?**

- **Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?**
  At first, I was paranoid about safety because worldwide, Mexico City is viewed as a very unsafe place. Nothing terribly dangerous ever happened to me, and nothing that I wouldn’t have risked just as much at UCSB. The best tip I could offer to a potential exchange student is to be aware of their surroundings and become knowledgeable of areas that are particularly dangerous and how to avoid them. Crime rates are higher and the same precautions should be taken as if they were to be in Downtown Los Angeles or San Francisco at 10pm.

- **Describe the public transportation in your host country?**
  It is very crowded! At times, the metro becomes sardine-packed during rush hours, but overall it is CHEAP!

- **Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?**
  Easy if and when the financial support was available to get a flight from Mexico City elsewhere.

**Host City/Country**

- **What was the weather like?**
  Very extreme on occasion. Some mornings could be very sunny and warm, while a transformation of climate took place during the afternoon where sparse showers would begin, and the nights would be very chilly (this was the case most of the year). Summer months are very hot ranging from 85-95°F with little humidity. During the rain season, it POURS! (make sure to pack rain boots). Otherwise, it comes to close approximation with SB weather.

- **Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?**
  It is hectic, extremely-highly populated, in a rush, and messy at times. It’s not too different to LA during rush-hour, except maybe a little more dense in population.

- **What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?**
  I was absolutely fascinated by how many museums and performances were held there. I did visited all the typical tourist attractions: La piramide del sol, Teotihuacan, Xochimilco, La Marquesa, El Zócalo, Coyoacán, Santa Fe, Polanco, Pumas soccer games, music concerts, Dave LaChapelle art exhibition, etc.
- How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?
It is very diverse. I met people from Romania, Lebanon, Italy, France, Germany, Japan, England, Brazil, Argentina, and El Salvador. It is a key city for international business and tourism.

Culture
- Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.
  - Time & punctuality
    In the business sectors of the city, punctuality is a MUST. As for the rest, not very many people are punctual.
  - Eye contact & staring
    Direct eye contact is a sign of respect and ambition, depending on the scenario. Staring occasionally offends some people.
  - Relationships
    People that approach you as friends usually tend to yearn for a long-term friendship. When a girl is “too nice,” men usually take an insinuation from them that they are interested in them at a partner level. Women need to be careful of their mannerisms because it is commonly mistaken as suggestive of something deeper than what Americans tend to express.
  - More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?
    My college was based on Administrative and Accounting fields, where everyone generally came dressed formally in comparison to other colleges. Dress for school is more formal than at UCSB, you cannot walk into a lecture in your pijamas. Also, sit-down restaurants and other indoor establishments usually expect a little bit more formal-casual dress.
  - Alcohol consumption
    The legal age for the consumption of alcohol and tobacco products is 18.
  - What culture shock did you go through?
    Not being able to study late through the night at an establishment because most businesses close early at about 4-6pm. It was extremely difficult to rely on public transportation when I had never even rode the bus in the United States. Guys also commonly approached me with other intentions because of my sense of expression that was taken as insinuation to something else.
  - Other?

Banking
- Were credit cards widely accepted?
  Not as much as in the U.S. Large establishments and typical food chains usually do accept credit cards, although depending on your bank, Debit cards might not be able to process.

- Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?
  No. The process to open bank accounts usually requires at least 2 years’ residence in Mexico, and proof of residence such as a water bill. It is a fairly complicated process that is unnecessary even if you are staying the full year.

- If you did not open a local bank account, was it easy to withdraw money from the ATM?
  Which banks were popular & had low ATM fees?
  Withdrawing money from the ATM was my usual form of receiving and pulling out money from my U.S. bank account. The most popular banks include Bancomer, HSBC, IXE, Bannorte, and Banamex.
The lowest ATM fees tended to be at Bancomer, IXE, and Bannorte. It is advised not to use Banamex with U.S. debit cards because they tend to “swallow” the card.

- Were there ATMs on campus?
  No