

UCLA Anderson Winter 2013 Exchange Summary

Going on the exchange program to UCLA Anderson for the winter term was one of the greatest experiences that I had. I enjoyed the classes and activities, the international atmosphere, living in Los Angeles and visiting California. Moreover I had great time being a full time student in Los Angeles, who can focus on both studying and also having fun, and of course I got to know great people and make good friends.

1. UCLA Anderson and the International Exchange Program

UCLA Anderson is among the US leading business schools. It provides a great international experience with 35% international students. The full time MBA program is quite large and about 350 fulltime MBAs a year attend the program.

UCLA Anderson academic year has 3 quarters and a summer quarter during which the full time MBAs do internships. Each quarter includes 10 weeks of class and about a week of exams. The exchange students can attend the fall term or winter term. Thus, the exchange program in UCLA is shorter than in many other universities, where exchange students attend a full semester.

Most of the international exchange students attend the fall term (about 50 students) during which a similar number of Anderson students leave for exchange programs in other universities. During the winter term only a small number of students (we were 11 exchange students during stay).

Although I agree that attending the fall term with a large group of exchange students may be preferred, I had a great and different experience during the winter term where I had a chance to make good friends with some of the few other exchange students, get to know and make friends with the full time MBAs.

2. Visa and Registration

Once you're accepted to the UCLA exchange program you'll receive an email from the international exchange program office which includes some information and a request to register online.

You'll have to attach your CV, a passport scan, a financial certification (which is required for the visa form and that shows that you can secure about \$7000, you can ask your bank to prepare a short letter) and a passport photo.

In addition, you'll be required to purchase a health insurance which cost \$255, the insurance is mandatory and required for the visa application, it can't be replaced with a local insurance, notice that it covers only the exchange time.

Once you've registered you'll receive a student ID (UID). The UID will enable you to open an UCLA email account. And access the URSA system that is used also in order to register to classes.

Note: while in UCLA, you'll use 2 email accounts the UCLA email and the Anderson email, choose a proper username for both since you'll be using them to contact professors, fellow students and people outside the university. (It's recommends to use the first letter of your name + your surname).

Later on the university will send the DS-2019 form to the exchange office in Recanati, the form is required for the Visa appointment. My form was quite delayed which only enabled me to issue to set a Visa appointment about a month before my departure. After receiving the DS-209 form you need to pay its fee (SEVIS, which cost about \$100) before you can apply for Visa.

Once you have all the documents you should apply for a J-1 Visa and set a Visa appointment.

3. Housing and Logistics

Housing: Once you've accepted to the program, I advise you to start checking for housing. I didn't do so and it was quite hard for me to find a place to stay for a short period (especially in the winter term). I ended up renting a studio from ZUMA housing (www.zumahousing.com), which were very nice, fair (for example, they helped me to find someone to replace me in my apartment for the last 10 days of the final month) and helpful but quite expensive.

I recommend, contacting the MBA students that are finishing the first year to try and find a place through them. (You can try and contact one the Israeli students that are likely to help, one of the past exchange students can help with that). There are about 50 Anderson students going abroad for an exchange program during the fall term which want to sublet their place and maybe even their car. Additional options to find housing include the university housing board and craigslist. The university has good housing

facilities which weren't available to the exchange students in my term but it's worth to check the option, you can contact the UCLA exchange office which are very helpful.

Housing costs are about \$900 - \$1300 a month for a room or about \$1700 - \$2000 for a studio or small apartment including all the expenses.

In my opinion you should look for housing in Westwood, this way you can enjoy the campus life better and avoid the L.A. traffic.

Transportation: Los Angeles is a large city, were most of people own a car, some of the exchange students rent or buy a car, I didn't do so. I did rent a car occupationally; there are student discount codes for UCLA student which give a substantial discount. Another option is to use the Zipcars located around the university, you can enroll from the UCLA site and get a discount on the Zipcar enrollment and some free hours.

Buses are available also during the night (at reasonable hours) and goes along the main roads most of the bus rides stops frequently and therefore the rides take time. Taxis are ordered by phone (You almost never can catch a Taxi on the way), a short ride is about \$10 and a ride back from downtown LA will be over \$40.

4. Academic

UCLA Anderson offers a large variety of elective courses in many different fields. You are expected to take 3 to 4 courses (most of the students take 4) out of the second year elective courses. Most of courses include about 3 weekly lecture hours and require some preparation before each class. Many of courses are based on case studies and you'll be expected to prepare the cases before class. In general, most of the courses are not too difficult but they do require effort. Most of the tasks are done in groups, and the working group is a great way to get to know the full time MBAs.

Some of the courses has a final exam, while others require to submit a final paper. You can plan the courses such that the workload and the exams meets your travel plans.

The exchange students can enroll to any of the courses, however some of the popular courses get full quite quickly. At my quarter, the exchange coordinator reserved few seats in some popular classes for the exchange program. During the first week of the quarter the students shop for courses and try multiple courses before choosing the ones they want to attend. You can enroll to more than 4 courses are keep the ones that you like.

Out of the 4 courses that I took there were 2 courses that I especially enjoyed. The first was Intellectual Property: Law & Strategy with Prof Lichtman, This is a joint course for the MBA and law students, it's a small class of only 30 students where we discussed intellectual property topics from both legal and strategic aspects. Prof Lichtman has a great experience on current and interesting issues especially on copyright issues (there's probably no where better than Los Angeles to learn about content copyright) and he's a great lecturer.

The second course was Entrepreneurship and Venture Initiation with Prof. Geis. This is one of the popular courses that most of the MBAs take at some point. The course is based on case studies, external visitors and the professor's vast experience. It does require some work (there's more or less a weekly task). In my group's final paper we did a market study on an invention of one of my team member's father. Working on an actual venture was a great experience.

Additional advice is to check the courses before you decide: talk with people, review the feedbacks in <http://andersonfeedback.com> and go check the first lecture.

5. Clubs & Extracurricular Activities

One of the great advantages of the US MBAs is the clubs or student associations. UCLA Anderson has more than 40 clubs that cover different professional interests (such as high-tech, entrepreneurship, marketing, ext..) or ethnicity groups such as the Jewish business student association (JBSA). The clubs are run by the MBA students; they organize lectures, activities, networking events and field trips.

Many of clubs will let your join during your stay for some reasonable fee, you should also monitor the activities of clubs that you didn't join and check for activities are open to all the students.

You should check the clubs before your arrival since there may be trips or activities before the start of the quarter that you may want to attend.

Few of club activities that I enjoyed include a Vegas trip to the CES exhibition that was organized by the high-tech and entertainment business associations, a TED week which included TED lectures screening with live panels and TED talks given by fellow MBAs, and the JBSA dinners for 8 or 20 which are a great opportunity to get to know some of the business and industry leaders.

6. Campus life

The UCLA campus is well equipped campus that offers recreation and academic activities. UCLA has football and basketball teams and I highly recommend going at least once to watch the games. UCLA offers great sport facilities that are available for the students including a pool and few GYM's. In addition, UCLA organizes lectures and other activities such as field trips. The MBA students have every Thursday's a social event called Anderson afternoon when there's food, beer and from occasionally some activities from a chili contest, to lectures.

7. Los Angeles and California

The UCLA campus is located in Westwood which is a nice neighborhood where most of the students live. Westwood has many restaurants and few local bars, it also has multiple movie theaters (when you'll see red carpets and an endless line you'll know that there's a movie premiere). The Santa Monica beach which is 45 min bus ride is a great place to visit and hang out. Los Angeles offer many tourist attractions from the Hollywood sign to universal studios. You can buy discounted tickets from almost any activity in the area at the university tickets counters.

There are few parks within a short driving distance from Westwood, which are great for hikes on Sunday mornings.

Notice that Los Angeles is a large city with heavy traffic, getting around, especially in the rush hours takes time.

A great advantage of south California is the weather. I spend the winter in Los Angeles and although it gets cold at night, expect few rainy days it was sunny most of time. Not too far from Los Angeles there are great cities to visit: San Francisco, San Diego and Las Vegas and if the weather permits also multiple nature sites such as Yosemite park or the Grand Canyon.

If you have any questions or want some advice, feel free to contact me at oded.wertheim@gmail.com