



Name: Ofri Gavish

Email: ofrigavish@gmail.com

Degree Program at TAU: MBA

Host University: Duke University, The Fuqua School of Business

Exchange term: Fall 2016 (term 2 only – 2 months)

Durham – North Carolina

Durham is a small town in NC, as part of the “Research Triangle” (Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill). The main attraction in Durham is Duke University and all that comes with it – the people, the sports, the college parties etc. Durham is known to be somewhat of a “foodie town” in NC, and it does have some good restaurants, mostly in the downtown area.

My best restaurant recommendations: The Pit for southern style ribs, Heavenly Buffaloes for the best wings you ever had, Gonza Tacos Y Taquila, Parker and Otis for lunch, Pizzeria Toro, and Dame’s Chicken and Waffles for the best southern brunch ever.

Durham also has a farmer’s market every Saturday morning during the fall which is highly recommended.

The night life is pretty low key (everything usually closes pretty early), but there are 2 main places to go out for grad students – “Tavern” Tuesday and “Shooters” on Friday. Both are typical American college bars, and are a lot of fun (once you have a few drinks ☺).

Durham and all around it is very beautiful in the fall, when the leaves are changing, and there are plenty of hiking options within 2 hours drive (Umstead Park, Hanging Rock State Park). There is also a big mall (Southpoint) with an AMC movie theater, and an outlet (Tanger) about 20 min outside the city.

The weather in the fall can be tricky, for me it started warm (around 20c) in October but got pretty cold (worst is 1-2c) in Nov-Dec, though not a lot of rain.

Living arrangements & Transportation

I rented a furnished apartment in Station Nine complex, which is where most of Fuqua students live. I had a 1br apartment (no roommates), and paid \$1300 per month all included. Station9 has a 24/7 gym, basketball court, pool, and a common room where some Fuqua parties are held.

It’s in a great location with a small shopping complex right across the street (including a great burger place, and grocery giant Harris Teeter – super convenient), and 9th street very close by, where there are a few restaurants and shops.

The Duke bus (free) comes by every 20 min and stops a short 3 min walk away from Station9, and the Duke Van drops off back home when needed.

Many of my friends from the exchange program managed to find a place to sublease in Bell West End, but keep in mind that most apartments there are unfurnished (and that can be a hassle for a short period of time).

In order to find accommodations, I suggest to get on the full-time students' facebook pages (e.g. "The Duke MBA – Daytime Class of 2017") and post that you're looking to sublease. Since some students from Fuqua are going on exchange programs as well, you might get lucky. You can always ask Carolyn for help contacting students from Fuqua as well.

Duke Van is an option to take a collective van from Fuqua (or anywhere else on campus) for free in the evening, after a certain hour. You can access it from the Duke app, under transportation. It's very convenient if you need to stay and study late in school.

Uber and Lyft are also very common and pretty cheap, as everything is pretty close together in Durham (Uber from/to Fuqua = \$6, from/to airport = ~\$20).

Downtown is a quick ~10 min Uber drive away.

Visa process

Getting a J-1 student Visa with Duke as your host is relatively simple. The process is very simple and you just need to follow the instructions sent out by Carolyn and bring the needed documents to your embassy appointment. In case needed the Duke Visa services can be reached by email or phone.

Vaccines

You need to prove that you are vaccinated in order to study in Duke as a foreign student. You will need to send them a report signed by your family doctor from Israel and fill out an electronic form. Most likely you will have to go through a TB test when you arrive in Duke because most kids in Israel don't do it. It's a simple and painless test.

Classes

About a month before school starts you will get an email with all available classes for exchange students. We don't get to take everything the full-time students get, and we can choose our classes only after the full-time students do, and so sometimes end up in the waiting list. The rule of thumb is- if you are within the first 10 places on the waiting list on the day that classes start, you will most likely get in the class.

The registration is done online, on a first-come-first-serve basis. In case you're on a waiting list, you can ask the registrar by email to open some more credits for you to register to a back-up class (in case you won't get the waiting list class).

I recommend to take up to 3 classes per term (each class is 3 credits), since taking more is pretty busy and between class and homework you won't have too much time to have fun. You can also audit a class (come sit in and listen), but if the professor is strict with students

reading the assigned material, it'll probably become too busy with your other classes. Each class is twice a week, for 2.25 hours per session. Most classes have a lot of reading to do before each class (materials you buy in the course pack), and some have assignments due every class.

The classes I took:

1. **Corporate Finance** with Professor John Graham – this is a great class, and I'm not a finance oriented person. The professor is awesome and makes it very down to earth and interesting. There is relatively a lot of work to do for this class – 2 take-home quizzes, 4 group case analyses, and a take-home final exam (which took me ~6 hours!). But for me it was worth it and I'm happy I took it.
2. **Negotiation** with Professor Greg Fischer – the class is great and fun because every meeting you get to practice your negotiation skills with different students. But the lecture part of class was not good, as the professor was not very inspiring. Nevertheless I liked the class because it made me practice my negotiation tactics in English, and do it while meeting many new people. You need to read a case and submit a negotiation plan every class, and there's also a group final project. No exam. Relatively easy class, and I would recommend to take it with another professor if possible.
3. **Marketing of Innovations** with Professor Debu Purohit – Nice and fun class, good professor, very passionate and entertaining. He brings many interesting examples of new technologies, and good guest speakers. There is 1 group case study, a group presentation and a final exam in class.

All in all I was happy with the balance of the classes I took and the workload – hard vs. easy, busy vs. light.

I suggest to consider the amount of work needed before choosing your classes. I also highly recommend to join study groups in which you don't know anyone in order to meet new people.

Extra-curricular activities

Fuqua is all about "**Team Fuqua**" and the social atmosphere, and it's really fun getting to know MANY new people – make sure to make lots of friends from the exchange program as well as the full-time MBA students. I also recommend to reach out to the full-time Israeli students before arriving in Durham, it's always nice to have the feeling of home around you with the Israeli community.

There are A LOT of things to do other than study. I recommend to join the org-sync website as soon as you arrive and register to clubs that interest you. There are clubs from tech to culinary, marketing, wine, running, general management etc. you will find something you love for sure. In this platform you can find all the events happening every day and register for them. Try out as much events as you can – seminars, lunches, happy hours, special guest speakers, parties, wine nights, case competitions, basketball (go Devils!) / football games etc.

It's also very important to know the term **Fuqua Friday** – every Friday at 5:30pm everyone gets together (including students, faculty, families and pets) with drinks and food and good vibes for the weekend. Each week a different club hosts the Fuqua Friday and provides a different kind of food.

I think this is the most special aspect of studying in a US university like Duke, so take advantage of it all while you can.

Costs

My cost breakdown was:

- Visa - ~\$1000
- Apartment - \$1300 per month all included, furnished
- Food - ~\$500 per month (school cafeteria, grocery store, restaurants, bars...)
- Transportation – Duke van and buses are free for students, Uber/Lyft costs ~\$50-70 per month
- Phone – a local sim with unlimited calls and texts and 4-5G of data costs ~\$50-60 per month, I suggest to get at&t sim, as their reception is best in Durham (I started out with T-Mobile and didn't have good reception at all).
- University costs
 - Mandatory payments per 1 term - \$1500 (including health insurance)
 - Course packs (materials per class, prices vary between classes) - \$185
 - Bursar (payment portal) takes only wire transfer (no credit cards), it's pretty difficult with an Israeli account only, and rather easy if you have an American bank account. Alternatively you can pay cash when you arrive.

Traveling around

NC is on the east coast, a quick 1.5-2 hour flight to/from NYC or Miami. I recommend to take some time to travel around the area while you're there.

I took 2 road-trips with friends from the exchange program, one over a weekend to Washington DC, and the second over Thanksgiving weekend (5 days off) to Charleston, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia. The southern people are warm and friendly and the vibes, food and atmosphere are awesome.

Additional Tips

- Get an Amazon Prime membership (free for students using Duke email) – it provides you with many movies and shows streaming, but most importantly – 2 days free delivery of practically anything you want. Best service ever (wish it worked in Israel)!!!
- This was a great time for me, so my advice is to use this time to experience, as you don't get this kind of adventure very often. Be open, talk to people, interact, network, learn, and take it all in 😊

Please feel free to contact me with any further questions!