AGSM MBA Programs

The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

Outgoing Exchange Testimonials

**Visa Application:**

- Had no problems besides the usual hassles when dealing with US Immigrations (long lines at embassy, bureaucracy, fees). International Office at University of Pennsylvania was very professionally organized, everything happens online.
- Immunisations are an enrolment requirement too (and therefore relevant to immigration). Make sure you get all necessary immunisations done before coming to the US. The university has a long list of required immunisations: the usual stuff, Polio, MRM, etc., but also Hepatitis B and in some cases Tuberculosis and Meningitis. You have to have written and certified documentation of all immunisations you have received.
- You need health insurance, too. The official University insurance is very expensive ($1,700), but you can request a waiver if you can prove your private insurance covers all required things. I saved more than $1,200 this way.

**Enrolment Procedure and recommended subjects:**

- Bidding requires a certain amount of research and time, to get a feeling for which amount of points is appropriate for each class. Some classes are quite popular and therefore “expensive” (Decision Making, Negotiations, Behavioural Finance / Economics, some real estate, entrepreneurship and VC subjects). But with the right bidding strategy, it’s possible to get into some of them. All the info is on the Wharton Auctions website, just read through the material. And you can ask me for advice too!

Definite recommendations in terms of subjects

- Negotiations. Great class, definitely a good idea to do that in business school because it gives you a safe practice environment. You can’t learn that just by reading a book.
- I loved my Business Ethics class. I know it’s a “fluffy” subject, but the stuff you discuss there is super-relevant, and I found the case discussions really valuable, maybe because there are lots of really smart people in the class (more than half of the students there are actually law students working on their JD, mostly with Ivy League undergrad degrees).
- The finance subjects I had were a bit underwhelming, but maybe that was due to my high expectations. Behavioural Finance is so far a bit of a letdown (the professor is really research-focused, not a teacher at all). Finance of Buyouts and Acquisitions is okay. Be aware that in all Finance classes, you will be surrounded by people who already have years of experience in investment banking, trading, private equity etc. So while the overall coursework (assignments, exams) is pretty doable, I felt the classroom discussions were way over my head.

**Workload at exchange school:**

- Similar to AGSM, maybe a bit less per subject (because we take 4 classes while most Wharton MBAs take 5). The exact workload depends on the class and your personal inclination, of course. Information on workload for each course is available from the survey results in the auction interface. It also gives information on cold calling, effectiveness of readings, % of group work, etc.

**Accommodation options:**
Surprisingly expensive, don’t expect to pay less than $800/month unless you want to share an apartment with 4+ people.
Options in terms of suburbs are

- **University City** (between 40th St and Schuylkill River). On-campus housing for postgrad students is available at Sansom Place. Usually shared apartments with 2 or 3 people, $700 and up.
- **Center City** (between Schuylkill River and Broad St). 99% of MBAs live in Center City, especially around Rittenhouse Square. I would definitely recommend Center City rather than University City. Room in a shared apartment with 1-2 roommates ca $700 and up, studio apartment $1000 and up.
- **Short-term accommodation** is available at the International House, ca. $900 per month. Kitchen and bathroom is shared among 10 people, so definitely not advisable for the full semester. I stayed there for the first 4 weeks, so I would have a place to go to when I first arrive, and then moved into a proper apartment in Center City.

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**Campus Facilities**

Everything is larger, and fancier... the Huntsman Hall is a massive, new high-tech building about 20x as large as the AGSM, everything you see there, from the wall coverings to the computer labs is sponsored by alumni and corporate donors. I found only the bathrooms to be a sponsor-free zone. But – there are 50x as many people as at AGSM (or more), so there’s still no guarantee you will get a group study room or a quiet space in the info commons. Forget about lockers, even the regular Wharton students have to enter a lottery to get one (and they have to pay for them too).

**Careers Services:**
I did not use their service, so I can’t say much about that. But from what I know, exchange students have access to exactly the same events and services as the regular students while they are there.

**Student life:**

Lots of stuff going on of course. Student club memberships cost money (!) but you can usually attend club events without a membership too. Every Thursday the MBA Pub is THE place to go, free beer, wine and pizza for a one-off fee of $85, so definitely worth it. Fridays and Saturdays are often club-organised themed parties.

I did do a lot of stuff with the other exchange students (there were only 12 of us, by the way, mostly from LBS). As I expected, meeting people in class is not that easy because the school is so anonymous. Most people in the elective classes barely know each other unless they were in the same cohort. Cohorts are groups of 60-70 students which are put together at the beginning of the program. The cohorts have all core classes together and are pretty close-knit. As an exchange student, you will be assigned one or two buddies, usually first-year students – ask them to take you to their cohort events and parties, this is a good way of meeting people outside of class.

If you don’t mind shelling out a few hundred dollars for a weekend, do participate in the annual skiing trip to Park City, Utah. It’s organised by the Ski and Snowboard Club and happens on a weekend in February (Wed through Sunday).

**Things AGSM MBA students should consider/be aware of when applying to this school for exchange:**

Because they have an undergraduate division, Wharton runs on a semester schedule unlike most other business schools. This means that you will be there from early January until mid-May, much longer than in other exchange schools. That of course has disadvantages (you complete the MBA later, putting in more work) and advantages (you get more time at an ivy league school for the same price ☺) If you plan to cram all 4 course units into one quarter – forget about it. Quarter-only courses are only auxiliary courses (writing in business, communication, etc.), not the regular subjects you’d take as electives.
Highlight:

It's probably too early to call. Social life – my first cohort party was pretty cool, I was a bit reminded of our Tooheysday tradition back in Sydney 😊. Academically – when the Ethics professor told us about her experiences from the World Economic Forum in Davos, how she brings us Kofi Annan’s best wishes and how she had this dinner chat with Bill and Melinda Gates.

Oh, and next week I’ll attend a lecture by Andre Agassi!