



# **Final report**

**Fall semester 2002**

**University of Northern Iowa**

**Cedar Falls, IA 50613**

**USA**



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# 1. Introduction

This report about my study at the University of Northern Iowa (Cedar Falls, Iowa) is not only a list of all my activities, courses and experience at the UNI, but it should be more like a little handbook for all students, who want to go to the University of Northern Iowa. All information and advice I give in this report, is from fall 2002, which means that the author doesn't guarantee actuality and completeness.

## 2. Preparation

### 2.1. Visa

All students who are interested in a semester at the University of Northern Iowa should look very soon for all information and, beyond everything else, for the visa, which will be required for a trip to the United States. But you can only apply for a visa at the U.S. Consulate in Vienna (Gartenbaupromenade 2, 1010 Vienna), when you get the confirmation from UNI. The following are required of all Visa applicants: application form, passport, photograph (37x37 mm), bank pay slip (\$45,--), confirmation of the University of Northern Iowa (form I-20), and all three copies of the form IAP-66. Men have to expect to fill out another application form with detailed questions about their history. I recommend submitting all documents by registered mail. In my experience, when you have all documents well prepared and you also pay the fee, you will get your visa without problems and very fast.

### 2.2. Health- and Travel Insurance

My colleagues and I took out an insurance policy before we traveled to the United States. We decided on the private travel insurance from ÖKISTA. We took the standard version and when you have a reduction card, for instance, the international student card ISIS or EURO 26, you will get lower tariffs. With reduction we paid €203,-- for five months instead of €214,--. This kind of insurance includes for example: 100% of medical care, baggage insurance, restitution of all additional traveling costs, etc. But you also have the possibility to take health insurance at the University of Northern Iowa, and you will get all information about it during the orientation week.

### 2.3. Credit Card

You can buy nearly everything in the United States with your credit card. Almost all shops and restaurants accept every common credit card, but in my opinion the most used credit cards are VISA and MASTER-Card.

The transfer of cash is quite expensive, and for every withdrawal you have to pay a little fee. My advice is to pay as much as you can with your credit card, or to withdraw bigger amounts with your bank- or credit card. Another possibility is the use of traveler's checks or bank checks to cover the cost of tuition, room and board, books, health insurance, and living expenses.

### 2.4. International Student Association (ISA)

The International Services Office assists students in their transition to campus from their home countries and in their daily campus activities while they are enrolled. When you have any questions, I recommend that you should contact the International Services Office. You should notify the ISA by mail, e-mail or fax of the exact date and time of your arrival, your carrier and the flight number, because they will organize a pick-up service from the Waterloo Airport. I have to say that we were very happy that somebody was waiting for us at the airport and assisted us with our luggage and everything else. We also received a welcome package with some important information, for instance city map and bus schedule, etc. Upon arrival on campus, all students have to check in and bring their travel documents to the International Services Office.



Pic. 1: International Student Office

The ISA organizes the orientation week, which will be discussed later, a welcome dinner, several various events, trips (among other things a trip to Six Flags, a famous amusement park near Chicago, or a trip to the greatest shopping mall in the United States - "Mall of America", etc.), and a farewell party, which was a Christmas dinner in our case.

### 3. Iowa

Named for the Iowa River, which was named for the Iowa, or Ioway, Indians. In 1846 Iowa joined the Union as the 29<sup>th</sup> state. As a tribute to chief Black Hawk, leader of the Sac Indians, who after their unsuccessful fight against white settlers were relocated to Iowa, the state is also called “Hawkeye State”. Iowa is known for its fertile prairie lands and heavily agricultural economy, and therefore Iowa is often considered to be the typical midwestern state. Although it is sometimes called the “Corn State”, Iowa really is a breadbasket for the U.S., with 90 percent of its land devoted to farming.

#### Some important facts:

Population: 2,926,324 (April 2000)  
 Land Area: 55,875 sq mi. (145 500 km<sup>2</sup>)  
 Capital: Des Moines (~ 200 000 inhabitants)  
 Abbreviation: IA  
 Nickname: Hawkeye State



The State Banner: In 1917 Mrs. Dixie Cornell Gebhardt of Knoxville and a member of the D.A.R. designed the state banner of Iowa, and in 1921 the flag was chosen as the official flag of the state. Gebhardt explained that the blue stands for loyalty, justice, and truth; the white for purity; and the red for courage. On the white center stripe is an eagle carrying in its beak blue streamers inscribed with the state motto “Our liberties we prize, and our rights we will maintain”. The word Iowa is in red letters just below the streamers.

8 biggest cities: Des Moines (~ 200 000), Cedar Rapids (120 758), Davenport (98 359), Sioux City (85 013), Waterloo (68 747), Iowa City (62 220), Council Bluffs (58 268), Dubuque (57 686) – Stand 2000.

Neighbor states: Minnesota (north), Wisconsin (north-east), Illinois (east), Missouri (south), Nebraska (west), South Dakota (north-west).

### **3.1. Climate / Weather / Clothes**

Iowa, like Austria, experiences four distinct seasons each year and students should be prepared for all types of weather. I recommend ledger and comfortable clothes for the summer, and warm clothes for the winter. Everybody who likes ledger clothes will love America. At the start of the fall semester in August it is usually quite warm, and most of the students only wear T-Shirts, Shorts and Flip-Flops, also in class. During the winter it is really cold and you should wear gloves, bonnet and warm clothes. As I mentioned, it will be very cold and the wind always blows, because UNI is the second windiest campus after Chicago. If you don't want to carry a jacket with you, or it doesn't fit in your suitcase, I'm pretty sure that you can find a cheap and good quality jacket there. I also bought a jacket in the near shopping mall, and it was really cheap, compared with the prices in Austria, because in the United States there is always and everywhere a special sale.

**Tip:** In any case, business students should take a business suit with them, because for presentations in business classes you will get points for your clothes. I mean, without a business suit you will receive zero points for your outfit, but this will be one part of your presentation grade.

### **3.2. General Information**

The people of Iowa are very friendly and helpful. I made many and good friendships and many of my friends invited me over for the weekend or for a longer time at their families, and there I was made to feel at home.

In the United States the ban of alcohol is very strict. When you will buy alcohol in a store or order it in a restaurant, you have to show your identity card (ID). If you are not over 21 or you don't have your ID with you, you don't get alcohol. In all bars around the campus you have to show your ID before you can enter, and if you are not over 21 or you don't have your ID with you, you cannot enter the bar. The bars in Iowa close at 2 o'clock in the morning.

## 4. University of Northern Iowa (UNI)

Web site - URL: <http://www.uni.edu>



The University of Northern Iowa was founded in 1876 and is located in Cedar Falls. In 2001 UNI ranked second in Midwest top public universities by U.S. News and World Report rankings of America's best colleges and universities for four consecutive years.

UNI is a medium-sized university and provides all students with an excellent undergraduate and graduate educational experience that truly places "students first". The university has more than 13,500 students from 47 states and 76 countries.

Colleges: College of Education, College of Humanities and Fine Arts, College of Natural Sciences, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and College of Business Administration.



Pic. 2: Curris Business Building

For all business students the UNI is one of the best places, because UNI is home to one of the finest business colleges in the United States. The "College of Business Administration" will be the second home for all business students, because all business courses are in the Curris Business Building. The building is named for ~~Constantine W. Curris, UNI's president from 1983 to 1995, and has been open since 1990.~~

### 4.1. Orientation week

The so called "orientation week" or "international student orientation and registration program" is designed to assist all international students in adjusting to UNI. During this week we learned about the American university system, we became familiar with the campus and they gave us important information about everything, which would help us succeed at UNI. In the following I give an overview about the activities and events during the orientation week:

A campus tour, a trip to the bank and to open a free student bank account, sessions on the U.S. education system, campus jobs, paying the UNI-bill and immigration issues, class registration, social security card sign-up, shopping trip and social activities. For instance, for students without health insurance it is possible to sign up for insurance at the UNI. On the campus there is also "Student Health Clinic", where all students get medical care. Medical care is free, the students only have to pay for the medicine, and they have the opportunity to pay cash or to

add the amount on their UNI-bill. I will discuss the UNI-bill later in its own chapter. During this week we had a session about “Public Safety” and for a better understanding the ISA organized a trip to Dubuque (Mississippi tour). In my opinion, you should not miss the orientation week, because you get the most important information and learn much about UNI, and I’m sure, that the beginning of the semester will be easier for you.

## 4.2. Housing

All students have to hand in not only their application form for UNI, but they also have to sign a “Residence Hall and Dining Contract”. You have to choose one from nine residence halls (Bartlett, Bender, Campbell, Dancer, Hagemann, Lawther, Noehren, Rider and Shull). Hagemann and Lawther are only for women and Bartlett is the only hall with air-conditioning. A detailed description of each residence hall can be found under the following link - URL: <http://www.uni.edu/dor/housing/halls/index.html>



**Pic. 3: Bartlett Hall**

My hall was Bartlett and I lived with François, a nice roommate from France. At the beginning we had some difficulties with the language, but during the semester we became really



**Pic. 4: Bartlett Hall**

good friends. As I mentioned before, Bartlett is the only hall with air-conditioning, and during the summer this is wonderful. Bartlett is a so-called co-ed house, which means for male and female, but unfortunately men and women cannot be roommates. The “Resident Assistant (RA)”, or “Stockwerksvertreter”, how we would say in Klagenfurt, is the first person you should talk to when you have any

problems or questions, and the RA is responsible for everything that happens in his or her house. You have to know, each hall has between 8 and 14 communities, which are called “houses”. About 50 students live in each house, which can be an entire floor of a hall or portion of a floor. All have common bathrooms and hallways. In every room is a phone, with voice mail, and you have



**Pic. 5: Bartlett Hall**



have the possibility to connect your computer with the Internet. Two desks and chairs, a wastebasket, two beds with mattress and mattress pad, two cupboards, a washbasin, a mirrored wardrobe, and cable TV access to more than 50 channels are the basic equipment of our double-room. For 75 Cents you can use laundry and dryer, and it is also possible to borrow a vacuum cleaner and cooking equipment from the residence office.

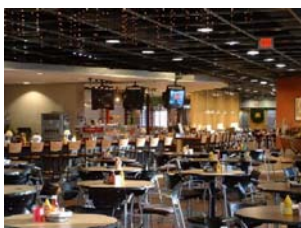
As I mentioned before, you have to choose your meal plan. There are three options: 19, 14 or 10 meals per week. With your choice you also choose your amount of dining dollars, because the dining dollars depend on the meal plan. You can use your dining dollars in every dining center and store on the campus (e.g., 23<sup>rd</sup> Market). The dining dollars are saved on your students ID, which you get during the orientation week after the registration process.

### 4.3. Meals and Dining Centers

With a valid meal plan you can eat in one of the three dining centers (Piazza, Commons, or Towers). The newest and most modern dining center is the so-called “Piazza” in the Redeker Center. I recommend this dining center, because it has the best choice of meals. But the food in the United States is not for everybody. I mean, the food is



**Pic. 6: Piazza**



**Pic. 7: Piazza**

very fat and nearly everything will be offered with extra-cheese. But there is a great variety of food - from a Salatbuffet, WOK, and normal hamburgers to Italian pizza, which is also offered with extra-cheese. There are also a great variety of different desserts. Therefore, UNI offers very good sport- and free time activities.

#### 4.4. Free time and Sport

Sports play an important role in the United States and every sport activity is always a big event. UNI is very popular for its football team called “UNI Panthers” and also its women’s volleyball team.



**Pic. 8: UNI-Dome**

The UNI-Dome has fixed seating for 16,400 and is home to the Panthers athletic teams, and is available for concerts and other major events. In 1998, the UNI-Dome became the first air-supported structure to be converted to a fixed roof.

Next to the UNI-Dome is the Wellness/Recreation Center (WRC), a very big fitness center. This \$18.3 million facility opened in the fall of 1997. It features the highest climbing wall in the Midwest, two pools with a water slide, running track, weight and fitness rooms, and basketball, volleyball, and racquetball courts. After presenting their UNI student ID all students can use the equipment for free, but all other fitness courses are available for a little fee.



**Pic. 9: WRC**

#### 4.5. Communication

As I mentioned before, every room has Telephone and Internet access. Family and friends can directly phone your room without any problems and if you are not in the room, they can speak a little message on your voice mail. You can use every offered phoning card in our room, but not every card offers the same tariffs for calling to Europe, especially Austria. For instance, I bought my cards in the Book & Supply for \$5 and had 85 minutes talking time to Austria. On campus the phone is free, but when you will call off campus you have to dial the 9 before.



**Pic. 10: Computer**

The cheapest and easiest method to contact your family and friends is via e-mail. On campus there are two big computer labs, which are open 24 hours. One is in the Redeker Center and the second one is in Towers. But you have also the possibility to use the computer in the Rod Library, and in each residence hall there are also computer terminals, where you can check your e-

mail account. For using the computer you have to give your e-mail address, social security number, and also your UNI-code, which you get in the first weeks. Many students have their own computer and unlimited Internet access is available.

#### **4.6. Study at the UNI**

The academic year is divided into three terms. Spring semester begins in early January and runs 16 weeks until early May. Summer terms offer four-, six-, and eight-week courses. These sessions begin in early May, June and July. Fall semester is 16 weeks long, beginning in late August and ending in mid-December. All courses require a lot of work, and they are not very easy. You have many exams and quizzes during the semester, not like in Austria, where you have one midterm-exam and one final. Most of the courses are comprehensive, and this means at the end of the semester you will have an exam over the whole book.

Foreign students have to choose four courses or 12 hours, and this will also be expected from the University of Klagenfurt. The students have to buy all books for every course at their own expense, and the books are very expensive. For example: The book for my Global Marketing course costs \$120. You have the possibility to sell back your books at the end from the semester, but you only get a small amount back. If you won't buy all books, you can try to copy the chapters, which will be discussed in class.

In the following, I describe all courses I did at the University of Northern Iowa. All instructors speak very clearly, and it is easy to follow. I mean, you won't have language difficulties in class, but to understand all discussions etc. with American students you will need time.

### **4.6.1. Principles of Financial Accounting (120:030)**

*Instructor:* Michael Oleson

*Book:* Fundamental Financial Accounting Concepts, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, by Edmonds, McNair, Milam, & Olds

*Course goals and objectives:* Students understand and can prepare financial statements using generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). This requires students to develop an understanding of the following:

- The procedures of double-entry bookkeeping and accounting cycle.
- The main accounting concepts and rules for the major categories of items on the balance sheet, on the income statement, and on the statement of cash flows.

The final grade is based upon the total points earned during the semester. Extra credit is not given and the final grades are not curved. Each quiz, exam, and final contain a mixture of multiple choice, problems and short-answer questions. Six 20-point quizzes are given during the semester. A student's lowest quiz score is dropped, and only the scores on the remaining five quizzes are used in determining that student's total points for the semester. The minimum points needed to earn a specific grade are as follows:

A: 370, A-: 360, B+: 350, B: 330, B-: 320, C+: 310, C: 290, C-: 280, D+: 270, D:250, D-: 240



**Pic. 11: Mike Oleson**

### **4.6.2. Global Marketing (130:177G)**

*Instructor:* Dr. Paul Chao

*Book:* Global Marketing Management, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, by Kotabe & Helsen 2001.

This course is designed to introduce students to management issues and challenges from a global marketing perspective. Major emphasis will be placed on the planning and analysis of strategic alternatives. Basic issues and problems associated with management decisions facing global marketers will be presented. Principal concepts (both theoretical and empirical) will be discussed. Three exams must be written during the semester and each exam is a mixture of



**Pic. 12: Paul Chao**

multiple choice and short-answer questions. Cases will be used to illustrate various types of problems and/or opportunities that global marketers are likely to encounter. Students will be assigned in teams to analyze and suggest solutions to these case problems. Two critique articles from the Wall Street Journals must also be completed.

#### **4.6.3. Leadership and Human Relations (150:119G)**

*Instructor:* Ph.D., SPHR Susanne Wurtz

*Books:*

- Dealing with People you Can't Stand, by Brinkman and Kirschner, McGraw-Hill, Inc., 2002.
- The Leadership Challenge, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, by Kouzes and Posner, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002.

*Course Description, Content and Objectives:*

The course provides an opportunity to develop human relations skills. A study of leadership theories and practices for the purpose of developing human resources within organizations. The goal of Leadership is to maximize organizational success through human activity. Three exams (take home and in class) and one or two papers are to be written during the semester. In my opinion, I have to say that the course doesn't hold what it promises.



**Pic. 13: Susan Wurtz**

#### **4.6.4. Internet Marketing (130:160:01)**

*Instructor:* Bob Cline

*Book:* E-Commerce Management Text and Cases, by Krishnamurthy, Thomson South-Western 2002.

*Course Description:* This course is designed to give the students an understanding of the strategic issues involved in using the Web to do business. Specially, how using the Internet integrates with various areas of marketing. During the semester four broad topics will be covered: Internet basics and business models; E-Marketing; Internet, government and society; and the future of



**Pic. 14: Bob Cline**

Internet Marketing. Students will be assigned in teams to develop a strategic plan to use the Web in a business situation. The final grade consists of the following components:

Exam 1 (10%), Exam 2 (10%), Exam 3 (10%), Final Exam (15%), Class Participation (10%), Weekly Assignments & Quizzes (15%), Journals (10%), Strategic Plan-Group Project (15%), Group Project Participation (5%).

#### 4.7. UNI-Bill

The UNI-Bill includes the tuition, housing and the meal plan, and also every other purchase you put on your bill. For foreign students the amount is a little bit more than \$2,000, but notice, the UNI-Bill cannot be paid by credit card. My advice is to open a bank account during the orientation week and to transfer the amount from your home bank in Austria. Sure, you have to pay a little fee for the transfer, but when you try to withdraw the amount with your credit- or ATM-card you also have to pay a fee. A big advantage is that to open and close a student bank account is totally free and in my opinion, this is the easiest and cheapest solution for a foreign student. Then you can easily pay the UNI-Bill with one of your checks from a



**Pic. 15: Gilchrist**

local bank. As I mentioned before, on the UNI-Bill is not only the tuition etc, but also everything you put on your bill. For instance, when you go to the Student Health Clinic, medical care is free; but you have to pay for the medicine, and you can also put this cost on your bill. When you will pay your bill you have to go to Gilchrist. Next to the entrance on the right side is the Financial Department.



## 5. Tips for Traveling

### Des Moines – Capital of Iowa

(~ 2 hours with the car)



### Chicago (Illinois)

(~ 6 hours with the car)

### Twin Cities - Minneapolis/St. Paul (Minnesota)

(~ 3 hours with the car)

If you go to Minneapolis or St. Paul you should a make a stop at the Mall of America.



To spend one semester at the University of Northern Iowa was one of the best decisions I ever made in my life. First, my experience about the business courses I took. My classes were very interesting, but I had a lot to do to, which I had not expected before. Finally, I finished all my classes with satisfactory grades. Furthermore, I improved my English, learned a lot about foreign cultures and had a lot of experiences. In short, it was really a great time at the UNI.

I also made good and important friendships with many other international students, and I am still in contact with them over the Internet, but I miss them a lot and I really want to go back.

To sum up, I only can say that I traveled and saw a lot, I learned a lot, and I also learned about myself and developed my own personality. I can only recommend to everybody to take the chance to go abroad , because the fall semester 2002 at the UNI was one of the best times in my life. I found many new friends all over the world, and I will never forget the experiences I made.

Take it easy and take care!

**Gerd: -)**