

## **Experience report: Transatlantic Summer School in Ames, Iowa**

As a Tourism Management student at Hochschule Harz, I had the extraordinary opportunity to participate in the two-week Transatlantic Summer School in Ames, Iowa – an experience I wholeheartedly recommend to everyone! This unique program was a collaboration between Hochschule Harz, Hochschule Ruhr West, Wayne State University in Detroit, and Iowa State University. With ten students from each institution, we took part in a one-of-a-kind exchange program focused on the inspiring theme, "Sustainability in Food: From Farm to Table."

From the first week, it was clear that this was more than just an academic program. We delved deep into the world of agriculture and food science, and it wasn't just about dry theoretical sessions. At the impressive Student Innovation Center of Iowa State University, we got to experience the fascinating realm of sustainable food production up close. The numerous field trips, which took us directly to the roots of American agriculture, were unforgettable. We visited the innovative Biocentury Farm, dedicated to sustainable farming, as well as traditional farms where vegetables are grown in greenhouses and apple orchards and vineyards are cultivated for regional wine production. The diversity and dedication with which these farms are run were truly inspiring.

Another highlight that made my heart race was when we all paired up in teams of two and cooked dishes we had planned beforehand. We shopped sustainably together at Aldi Süd, which also operates in the U.S., carefully selecting our ingredients and coordinating with other teams to avoid unnecessary purchases. Then, it was off to the kitchen. This experience not only taught us the importance of conscious and sustainable consumption but also how much fun it is to create something delicious together.

And that was just the beginning. The tour of the gigantic Jack Trice Football Stadium at Iowa State University left me speechless. The sheer size and energy of this stadium were simply overwhelming, offering us a deep insight into American sports culture.

However, what truly made this Summer School special was the connection we students built with each other. In such a short time, friendships were formed that will surely last long. Whether exploring Downtown Ames, celebrating at a karaoke bar, or enjoying the authentic American charm of the Midwest – every moment was filled with laughter, new experiences, and a sense of togetherness.

In the second week, we immersed ourselves in the Design Thinking phase, an intensive and creative process that challenged us to work in six groups on various topics. Our focus was on the SDG "Zero Hunger," and in these interdisciplinary teams, we learned not only how to work effectively in a team but also the importance of integrating different perspectives to develop innovative solutions. This phase was not only educational but also deeply inspiring, showing me how much can be achieved when we work together toward a common goal.

Another aspect that made this experience so valuable was that all classes and activities were conducted in English. Initially, I thought this might be a challenge, but the harmonious and open atmosphere made learning not just effective but incredibly fun. I never felt held back by my English skills – in fact, I enjoyed every moment and gained tremendous confidence.

The Transatlantic Summer School in Ames was an experience I would recommend to anyone – whether in the U.S. or Germany. It offered an invaluable opportunity to deepen not only academic knowledge but also to experience cultural differences, forge new friendships, and gain crucial insights into sustainability. These two weeks enriched my studies and helped me grow

as a person. If you have the chance to participate in this program – take it! You won't regret it.