

Study in the USA

–

ready, set, go!

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American Embassy
Sulgeneckstrasse 19
3007 Bern
<http://bern.usembassy.gov>



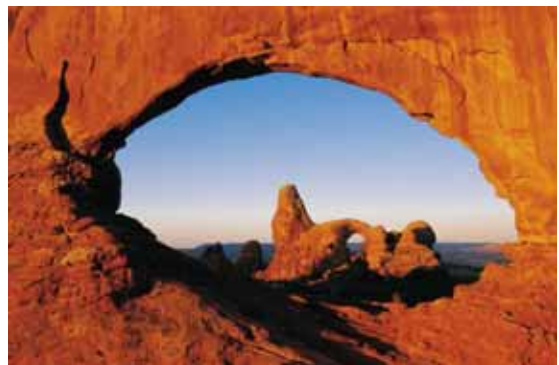
Introduction

- a) Why study in the U.S.?
- b) The most important facts about U.S. higher education
- c) Roadmap to departure
- d) How to find the right university
- e) Applications
- f) Financial aid
- g) Visas



a) Why study in the U.S.?

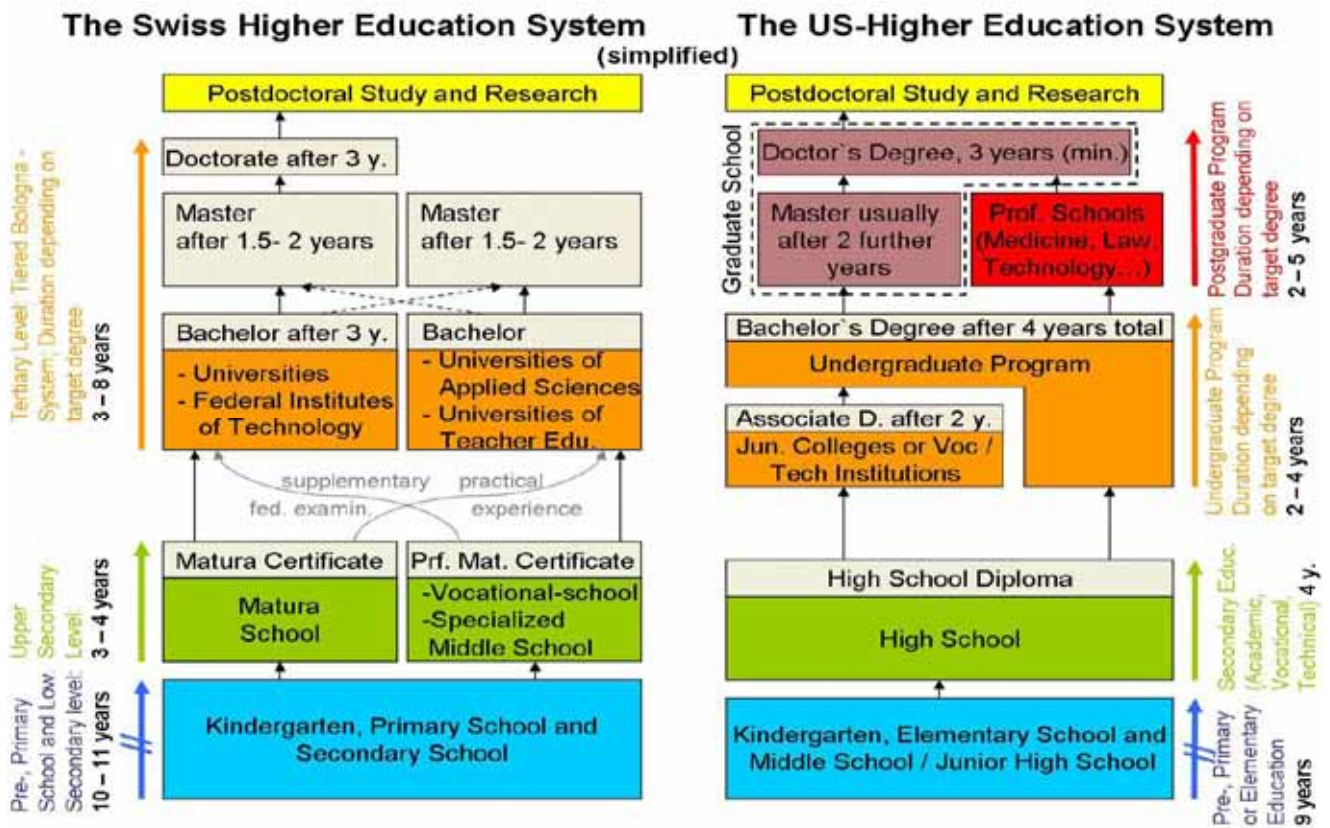
- The English language; American culture is not that different, so you will not suffer a culture shock
- Self-initiative, independence
- It is an asset to your C.V. and can enhance your career opportunities
- Great experience
- New horizon, new friendships ...



Youth exchange Switzerland – USA

- **Students**
approximately 1,500 Swiss students attend a U.S. institution of higher education per year (Ø past 10 years)
- **Exchange students**
about 400 Swiss high school students spend a year abroad with an American host family every year

b) Higher education systems Switzerland – USA



Bachelor of Arts/Science

- Bachelor programs: basic studies
- **Lower Division** (freshman and sophomore) can lead to Associate of Arts at a community college
- **Upper Division** (junior and senior) Major, may include diploma thesis
- Lower and upper division are called **Undergraduate Studies**



Bachelor of Arts/Science

- Mainly existing knowledge and lectures, research only in certain cases (= standardized program)
- 50% major, 25% obligatory courses, 25% electives
- 12-18 credit hours per semester (about 30 ECTS)
- Total of 120 credit hours needed to graduate
- 14.7 million students in the USA, of which 12.6 million are undergraduate students (85.7%), 1.8 million are graduate students (12.2%) and 300,000 are professional students (2.1%)

Master of Arts/Science

- Master programs are generally two year programs
- Reapply at a **graduate school** (incl. essay), possibly at a different university
- Selection process by the professors and not by the admissions office
- GRE Test (Graduate Record Exam)



Costs of a stay abroad in the U.S.

- Public universities and colleges: at least \$4,000 per semester (tuition and fees)
 - Private universities: up to \$40,000 per year (tuition, fees and living expenses)
 - Insurance
 - Books
 - Living expenses
- ▶ ~ 22,000 CHF per year



c) Roadmap to departure

- Start of the academic year in the USA: end of August / beginning of September
 - Application deadlines at universities approximately one year ahead
 - Application deadlines for grants / scholarships as much as 18 months in advance for certain programs
- ▶ Start planning your stay abroad **at least one year before departure!**

March to June of the previous year

- First preparations: 15-18 months before the anticipated start of the studies
- Plan strategically
- Review the requirements
- Estimate the costs and budget your expenses

July to August of the previous year

- Consult the websites of the colleges and universities: which language and entry test do you need for the application?
 - TOEFL: Test Of English as a Foreign Language
 - GRE: Graduate Record Exam
 - SAT: Scholastic Aptitude Test
 - GMAT: General Management Assessment Test
- Register early for the test and prepare well
- www.ets.org/



August of the previous year to January of the current year

- Test results
- School documents (translated and certified)
 - Maturity diploma
 - Documentation of any attended university courses (transcripts)
 - Diplomas, pre-diplomas
 - Attestations of passed exams or diploma supplement
- 2-3 letters of recommendation (English)
- Essay
- Application forms for the U.S. university or college
- Application fee
- Proof of financial assets

February to April

- Colleges and universities send out their decision letters to applicants



March to August

- Decide which university you want to attend
- Send a short note to universities you will not attend but which grant you admission
- I-20 or DS-2019 form to apply for a visa

d) How to find the right university

There are over 4,000 institutions of higher education in U.S., of which over 1,700 are community colleges!

- Selection criteria according to personal preference (i.e., region, subject, financial means, size of university / city, etc.)
- Choose a shortlist of universities (ca. 15-20)
- Request application documents for the universities and the scholarship / grant programs (Fulbright, government scholarships, stipends from cantonal authorities, charitable foundations)

Limit the number of potential universities

- References (bureau for professional orientation, mobility persons at universities, libraries, etc.)
- www.petersons.com/educationusa
- Websites of the U.S. colleges and universities
- Homepage of the American Embassy
<http://bern.usembassy.gov>
- Internet search engines

e) Applications

- Prepare your application well
- Send your application to 4-6 universities of your choice (of the 15-20 requested application documents)
- Take care of all the formalities as soon as you are granted admission. Start looking for accommodation, insurance, and a visa.

Application essay

- The university wants to know who you are
- Where are your strengths (and weaknesses)?
- Why precisely do you want to go there?
- Be creative!
- Show your strengths to stick out of the mass of applicants
- Also indicate extracurricular activities and engagements

f) Financial aid from universities

Various assistantships:

- teaching assistantship
- research assistantship
- administrative assistantship

Depending on the university:

- financial aid for international students
- athletic scholarship
- www.edupass.org/finaid

Support from the governments

- Government scholarships
- Fulbright Scholarship Program
- <http://www.crus.ch/information-programmes/bourses-pour-les-etudes-a-l-etranger/grants-for-the-usa-20102011.html?L=1>
- Charitable foundations and partner universities
- Regular stipends from the cantonal authorities

How to apply for a scholarship

- Why exactly should *you* be given a scholarship?
- Clear and realistic self-evaluation (the better your grades, the better your chances for a scholarship)
- Absolutely meet the deadlines for applications!

Sorry but no ...

- Two or three blank spaces
- Contradictory statements
- Chaotic presentation of past university and extracurricular achievements and experience

There is help out there!

- Read the information about the required documentation (letters of recommendation, language tests, etc.)
- Take advantage of all available sources of information
- Read reports of former scholarship students
- Talk to returnees, lecturers, and professors

My advice as student adviser

- Read the information provided on our homepage http://bern.usembassy.gov/study_usa.html
- Go to the homepages of the responsible offices, universities, and colleges
- Select and collect information material
- Work your way through this information
- Think about questions in advance
- Set an appointment with the corresponding persons

Paperwork

- Scholarship applications are done in writing and the selection committees will read your application
 - ▶ The effort is really worth it!
 - ▶ 60% of the applications are incomplete or full of spelling mistakes
 - ▶ Grammar mistakes do not reflect well on your application
 - ▶ 10% are written by hand and barely readable!

Biggest challenges / uncertainties

- Why am I motivated to study abroad in the USA?
Knowledge of the academic program facilitate your argumentation.
- "The American university will surely have something interesting for me."
 - ▶ There is abundant literature about application essays
 - ▶ Remember, your application essay is read like a job application

Student athletes



- Athletic scholarships
- Special rules and regulations apply to student athletes
- Get in contact with the coach

g) Visas

- The university or college will issue you an **I-20** form (F-1) or a **DS-2019** form (J-1)
- U.S. Embassy in Bern:
Visa application fee (MRV) and **SEVIS fee** (Student Exchange Visitor Information System)
- http://bern.usembassy.gov/required_documentation.html
- <http://bern.usembassy.gov/francais.html>
- <http://bern.usembassy.gov/sevis.html>

Visas

- Schedule a personal visa interview via our hotline 0900 87 84 72, CHF 2.50/min.
- Show that you have close connections to your country of residence and that you intend to return after your stay abroad.
- Stick to the rules during your stay abroad!

Accreditation of foreign study programs in Switzerland

- Institutions of higher education have to be accredited <http://bern.usembassy.gov/accreditation.html>
- During your studies, the university departments are responsible for accreditation
- Learning Agreement: contact your study coordinator

Recognition of foreign diplomas and titles

- Infocenter for questions about recognition (Swiss ENIC) of the Rector's Conference of the Swiss Universities
- http://www.crus.ch/information-programmes/reconnaissance-swiss-enic.html?no_cache=1&L=1

Conclusion

- Quite a bit of paperwork, but it is worth it!
- Best time for a stay abroad: after the 5th or 6th semester shortly before the bachelor degree to a **graduate school**
- You have already acquired expertise that you can elaborate on in the U.S.
- There are more possibilities to receive financial support
- From a financial perspective, the partner universities are preferred (the persons responsible are the mobility persons of the Swiss universities)

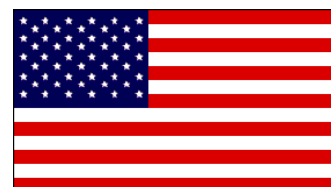
Internet links about study in the U.S.

- U.S. Embassy
http://bern.usembassy.gov/study_usa.html
- Official site of U.S. higher education
<http://educationusa.state.gov/>
- Embassy of Switzerland in Washington
<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rep/nameri/vusa/wasemb/wassnt.html>
<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rep/nameri/vusa/wasemb/wassnt/wasfsr.html>
- Swiss government grants (CRUS)
<http://www.crus.ch/information-programmes/bourses-pour-les-etudes-a-l-etranger/grants-for-the-usa-20102011.html?L=1>

If you have further questions...

- <http://bern.usembassy.gov>
- E-mail: bernpa@state.gov
- Phone 031-357-73-76
Tue, Wed, Thu 14.00-17.00 h

▶ No cost: it's free!



Study in the USA — of course!

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