

## Live Chat: Life in Durham

KIMBERLY: OK. Hey, guys. Thanks for being here.

I'm Kimberly. I'm a first year PhD student in civil and environmental engineering.

And I'm Steven Conklin. I'm a third year from the chemistry department.

KIMBERLY: So we're going to start taking your questions. The first one is, please recommend great [INAUDIBLE] and also show us interesting places. Have fun around Duke. Would you like to start?

STEVEN CONKLIN: So I guess, for me, some of the good restaurants that are around Duke would be around 9th Street. 9th Street there are-- actually, several restaurants that are pretty good.

I really like a restaurant that's called Blue Corn, which is like a Hispanic restaurant, sort of a Cuban twist to it. And also Juju, which is like a tapas place. There's a lot of really great foods around.

I guess places to have fun around Duke, it depends on what you're looking for. So if you just want to go explore and just have like an outside environment, well, the Duke Garden is always a good area to explore.

And what else? And I guess there are multiple things. There are multiple trails and lakes around the area and hiking trails.

What about you?

KIMBERLY: So I like downtown for restaurants. There's things like Gonza Tacos and Tequila, which is wonderful. Dame's Chicken and Waffles, which I just tried for the first time, and mad I haven't tried it before.

But there's lots of fun stuff to do around Duke. Like he said, there's lots of trails. My roommate and I go on walks all the time. And it's really wonderful and pretty.

There's also a lot of events going on in Durham. Durham's a pretty young city, so there's always something fun going on, art festivals, beer festivals. A pretty good variety.

STEVEN CONKLIN: And there are [INAUDIBLE] truck rodeos. For those who don't know what a food truck rodeo is, it's an amazing event. A ton of food trucks just come together, and, well, almost-- well a big portion of Durham's population just goes to those [INAUDIBLE]. Then you can try to like each food truck and try all their foods. And it's really, really amazing.

So I guess the next question is or the comment is, I am an incoming international student. What is the usual procedure for finding an apartment near Duke? I would like to find housing before coming, but I won't be able to visit beforehand, so I don't know if that would be possible.

So I guess as an international student, there-- well, as a grad student, in general, I think there is a website called Duke List. So if you have your net ID and your password, you can login to what's called Duke List, and you can check different postings for house rentals, apartment rentals, condo rentals, any kind of rentals, also to find roommates, which is good for if you're coming here for the first time and you don't know what to do.

And also, if I'm not mistaken, I think there's a house-- or housing for international students. And I think the graduate school also helps international students like transition from wherever you're coming from to Duke. And then they help you out and give you information to go to find your own place.

KIMBERLY: Yeah, so that's called International House. You can get on their email list from the website. And they can help you with that transition.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, and if you login to the information or you just call International House, that can provide further information for whatever needs you have.

I guess the next question would be, what is the most appropriate housing option for a single graduate student at Duke? You want to go for that?

KIMBERLY: Sure. I think, like he said, Duke List is great. You can find roommates, if you're looking for that kind of situation. Or there are plenty of apartment complexes around that are very reasonably priced.

There's also a couple of realty companies, so like Bob Schmitz, Apple Realty are both places that manage a lot of different properties and will have a lot coming available in the next month or so.

STEVEN CONKLIN: And also, I guess, I'm not sure if this goes with your question. For appropriate housing options, if your intention is to know if you should get a single bedroom, two bedrooms, or how big of a room or however big place you want, at least in my case, I live in a two bedroom apartment, and I have housemate.

So the good thing about having a housemate is that you can have a bigger apartment, and then just reduce the cost or divide the cost between the housemate and you. So it's a lot cheaper.

I guess another question would be, how to eat lunch on campus and what's the cost?

So how to eat lunch on campus. There are a couple of options to get food around campus. In campus itself, there's a place that's called West Union, which is just a huge building with a lot. It's like a huge variety of foods. It goes from Indian to Mexican to farm-to-table food, sushi, ramen, you name it. Everything is like literally there.

There are also some coffee shops that you can go to, like Au Bon Pain. There's also Joe Van Gogh, Tweenies. There are a lot of cafeterias that not even I have found yet. There are like multiple cafeterias all over the place and multiple food options.

KIMBERLY: Yeah, Duke actually was ranked number one for on-campus food this year. And I think that's pretty accurate.

The nice thing is the undergrads don't have like traditional-style dining halls. They get points that they can spend at these restaurants. So grad students definitely can benefit from that.

STEVEN CONKLIN: And also, I'm not sure if you guys are familiar, but you can either pay with cash or credit card, or you can also like activate something that we call a FLEX account. So it's like your food points. So you can just add some money to that, your ID or your student card, and then you just swipe that card, and it just works like a credit card.

So I guess for the following question, what is the public transportation like? Would you like to add on this?

KIMBERLY: Sure. I take public transportation everywhere. My apartment complex is right by a bus stop, so I just take that into campus, which is really nice, because then I don't have to worry about driving. And Duke gives us free bus passes that we can use for the city buses that you can actually use-- it's called Go Transit, I think.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah.

KIMBERLY: And you can use it in Raleigh and Durham, which is really nice. And there's also campus buses that go between east and west campus, and also other locations.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, there's also-- if you're interested to go to Chapel Hill, there's also a shuttle that takes you from Duke to UNC. I don't really use public transportation. My housing is a little bit further off and further away, and I can't really use it.

So the following question would be, the apartment-finding process sounds rough-- yes, it is-- I have heard that many places take tons of applications for individual units. The units are not distributed in the way they are applied for and how-- wait-- [INAUDIBLE] distributed in a way they are applied, and most money in fees is lost. How can I avoid this?

KIMBERLY: Well--

STEVEN CONKLIN: That's a good question. So I guess-- I'm not sure about the whole question, but the units--

KIMBERLY: So I know when I was looking for apartments, I met University Apartments, and they told me they were pretty straightforward with me on how many units were available and what I could get. I know they were really transparent. I don't know.

I know with some realty companies will take a lot of applications and only pick one, but I think that's just pretty standard.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, and you can always ask. I think you can see the availability of the apartments online. Most of the places where you can rent, when you type in the information on what kind of apartment you want, like, let's say, a one-bedroom apartment, they show you all the listings that are available. And you can actually click on that option and select that apartment and just reserve your spot there.

Another thing that I would recommend if you don't just do the website option, just call them and say, hey, I'm very interested in this apartment. I want to-- I really want this apartment. Can I reserve this apartment and make sure that I have it? Because I'm not going to be in state, or I'm not going to be around the area. Therefore, I can't really visit.

So I guess that would help, if you have direct contact with them and just call them online-- call them on the phone.

So what sort of outdoor recreation is there in Durham? I'm interested in places to hike, bike, and backpack.

There are a lot. So I guess if you look at Duke campus itself, we have the Duke Gardens, which is an amazing area that you can just walk around and just explore.

There are multiple trails around Durham. The one that I'm mostly familiar with is the Tobacco Road, or Tobacco Trail, that you can actually bike all over the place.

Hiking, hiking, hiking-- have you ever hiked around here?

KIMBERLY: Yeah, so there's Falls Lake.

STEVEN CONKLIN: That's true.

KIMBERLY: Eno River State Park, that's really close. There's trails in Durham that are really nice, like the Al Buehler Trail. There's also-- the mountains are pretty close. Asheville's about 3 and 1/2 hours away. So it's definitely feasible to head out there and go to the Blue Ridge Parkway, which is one of my favorites.

There is also a lot of biking communities for road biking as well. And I'm trying to think. Backpacking, there's a lot around, because we have Virginia Shenandoah north of us, Asheville west of us. Kind of the full spectrum of--

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, and even if it's not just in Durham, you have also Chapel Hill-Raleigh area, and you can go around the RTP area. The wonderful thing of being in the RTP, which is Research Triangle area, which is Chapel Hill, Durham, and Raleigh, is that you have the mountains like 2 hours away, and you have the beach 2 hours away. So you're right in the center of everything.

So it doesn't matter where you live in this area. You practically have everything at your reach. So if you just want to go backpacking somewhere, you can backpack-- well, I'll go to the mountains. Or you're hiking to the mountains, or climbing, rock climbing, and stuff like that.

Yeah, so I guess, what is the performing arts scene like in Durham?

So I guess a great example of that would be what we call DPAC, so it would be DPAC, which is a performing arts center, lots of concerts, and performances, like Broadway performances, art performances, or theater performances happen throughout the year.

Also, I guess there's a lot of indie music scene in the Durham area. Like there are some things that we call bar crawling and stuff. You have different bands that go to different spots, and you can go see their performances. I'm not sure if you have anything.

KIMBERLY: Yeah, so one of the things that I really like is-- because I'm really into podcasts, so I like storytelling. So Durham has a lot going on there, too.

Duke recently just had a storytelling event, and there's one that goes on in Durham called The Monti, pretty regularly at Motorco, which is a local bar that has music and events. And so I really enjoyed those. I thought they were a lot of fun.

STEVEN CONKLIN: And they have bingo, which is fun.

KIMBERLY: Very important.

STEVEN CONKLIN: I guess another thing that I also remembered, Duke itself has its own theater, obviously, and they have actually several performances, either classical, instrumental, and even concerts that are really good. And you get the student discount. So you pay for the whole concert like an orchestra for just like \$10, because of the student fee-- a student price. And you have quite a lot to do.

Another thing that just to refer back to the apartment search, you can look-- what I-- because I also mentioned like Duke Listing to show-- to look for different apartments and rents and stuff like that, you can go to the website, which the website is [dukelist.duke.edu](http://dukelist.duke.edu),

And you can just login. Login with your ID. Login with your password. And you can literally search just about anything. There is-- the categories are like jobs, for sale, off-campus apartments, services, lost and found, community. There's just about anything that you can find that's just for the little-- well, for our Duke community.

So the following question-- I should keep on going-- is how LGBT-friendly is Durham?

So Durham itself, I find that it's-- I'm part of an LGBT community, so I find that it's quite friendly. It's really friendly, especially the Duke campus is really open-minded.

And we also have-- we had some Duke communities and societies in Duke, like Duke Out, Duke Out Med.

The center of gender and-- there are multiple options that you can go through, if you want to access. There are a lot of activity and community outreach that you can do.

Outside of Duke, it's the same. It's pretty open-minded. And it's pretty good. It's not-- there's always going to be a situation here and there, but it's quite friendly in general.

KIMBERLY: I think that covers just about everything. I find it to be-- or Durham, in general, to be fairly progressive and pretty open-minded and open to whatever.

STEVEN CONKLIN: So I guess the next-- the following question is, what neighborhoods should we watch out for?

OK. This is like a little bit of a hard question. So the area itself is pretty safe. There are some spots that tend to be like hotspots for crimes, but I guess it depends on what you consider that it's a hotspot or not. At least where I come from, what we consider here as a hotspot is not as dangerous at all, because of the crime incidents.

But I guess the area that you would be, like you can login on-- you can go online and actually search for the different situations that arise, or if there's any crime happening, you can login and check, hey, there have been these many crimes around the area. And you can just look up that information online.

At least the areas that I'm familiar with are a little bit further off, like East of campus. Those are the areas that I guess are ones that tend to have a little bit more criminal activity than the rest of it. But overall, the area is pretty safe.

KIMBERLY: Yeah, I agree. I definitely recommend reaching out to people in your department to ask about specific neighborhoods, just because I think that's hard to answer on a broad scale.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Just ask-- what she mentioned, just ask your fellow department people. And also online. You can find just about any information.

You can look for-- for instance, you're going to rent an apartment very close by, and you don't know how safe the area is, you just go to the Duke police-- well, not the Duke police. The police department website and see how many crime incidents, if there are any, or have there been any crime incidents around that area.

So is it easy to park on campus?

So you require a pass. So you get a pass. You can practically park wherever you selected.

There is a process for you to get that pass, like that parking pass. It depends on the availability. Sometimes they put you on a particular parking lot for some time, like a temporary parking lot, and then they transfer you to whatever parking lot you wanted at the very beginning.

Obviously there's a waiting list, because there are a lot of students, and a lot of students want to park on campus. That's why we sort of recommend try to carpool. And if you carpool, actually, you get a parking pass for that day that you carpooled.

Yeah, I think that's it. Just go through the process of getting the pass. And hopefully, you get yours in time. If you can do it the earliest as possible, I would recommend you do it as early as possible, so you can get your pass by the time that you get here.

I'm not sure. You're newer. I'm not sure how the process has changed.

KIMBERLY: I mean, I bus to campus, so I really have no idea. I don't even think I've logged in to the transportation website yet.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, I know at least if you carpool or you bike some days, they give you special passes so you can park into a particular spot, just because you carpool and you used a bike every once in a while. So it's pretty good. If you can't really find a pass, you can do that.

And you can also-- I don't know-- if you're going to get a roommate, just carpool with your roommate if they come to Duke.

So how do you spend an ordinary day in Duke? How long do you spend on studying and homework? How long do you spend in the gym?

OK. How long do you spend an ordinary day? How do you spend an ordinary day in Duke? Well, I'm a graduate student in chemistry, so I do wet lab chemistry, so I'm always hands-on experience. So my day at Duke, an ordinary day at Duke is in lab. I'm going to spend most of my day in lab.

That's mostly about it. And then I go for my own coffee break. I go to Joe Van Gogh, and get my coffee, get my caffeine fix, and keep on going. So how about you?

KIMBERLY: So I'm a really early riser. So I usually get up around 5:00-ish, and do some-- I do modeling, so I'm always on the computer, and I don't have to come into the lab. So I will wake up, do some work, maybe spend 30 minutes to an hour running or working out.

There's a pretty nice gym on campus that's pretty central to most buildings. So it's definitely possible to take clothes and shoes with you to campus and work out. I have a lot of friends who do that.

I usually spend probably 8 to 10 hours a day working on stuff. It really depends on-- I'm a first year, so I'm in a lot of classes. So it depends on my work load, whether I have research things to get done, et cetera.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, I guess to answer the other two questions, at least from my area. So the question was, how long do you spend on studying and homework?

It depends on your discipline. If you are in a PhD program, usually the first year or so, you take the courses. So that's going to be a very heavy load, and then you affiliate, and after you affiliate, you-- it depends on the program. you just do research, or you just dive into the [INAUDIBLE] component of it that's not academic-- well, not academic. It's not course-related. So at least in my case, since I'm a third year, I don't have to take any courses at all.

And how long do I spend in the gym. I guess it depends on how late I leave lab. Like it was mentioned, we have a la-- we have a lab. We have a gym, and it's actually really good. They have just about anything in there. And they also provide classes, like spin classes.

KIMBERLY: There's A rock wall that's really cool.

STEVEN CONKLIN: A rock wall, it's really cool as well. There are a lot of things. It's pretty cool.

So you're going to have-- if you have the time to go to the gym and do all these things, you definitely have options.

I guess for the following question, is there a big shopping mall? So there is a big mall. The one that I'm mostly familiar with is called the Southpoint Mall, so it's Streets at Southpoint. That's the area where I live, actually. It's like 14 minutes away. And it's a pretty big mall. It's pretty impressive. It's really good. They have lots of nice restaurants around the area as well, a movie theater, and obviously the mall so you can go shop or whatnot.

There's one close by. I always forget the name.

KIMBERLY: There is one at Northgate.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yes, that one.

KIMBERLY: It doesn't have a lot, to be honest. I definitely always go to Southpoint, because it's outside-- half outside, and I really like that. But there's also Crabtree in Raleigh--

STEVEN CONKLIN: That's a mall.

KIMBERLY: --that's, I think, bigger. I am not sure. But if it's not at Southpoint, it'll probably be at Crabtree.

STEVEN CONKLIN: You can get a bus from here to there, well, from here to Southpoint, if you don't have a car. Or you can get an Uber. Ubers are pretty good around this area.

Is it possible to find accommodation at a cheap rate near Duke? So I guess accommodation like an apartment-- it depends.

KIMBERLY: Yeah.

STEVEN CONKLIN: If you're looking for an apartment, it depends on-- OK, so yes and no. Yes, because there are some-- the closer you get to Duke, the closer the apartment is to Duke, the more expensive.

And the closer you are to a lot of undergraduates-- I'm not sure if you want to be that close to undergraduates when you are doing your PhD or Master's, which you're going to be very stressed out and don't really want other people bothering you. So yes, you can find some that are close by, but you're going to have that little situation happening.

But apartments very close to Duke tend to be quite expensive. And that's if you want an apartment by yourself.

There are also houses that are like surrounding areas that you can rent-- well, not rent, you can rent a room with housemates. And they tend to be very affordable. I think some people pay like \$300, \$400, \$500 of rent, while sharing a whole house. So the perks of that is that you have a house.

And obviously, you can also share an apartment. And you're closer to Duke than I am, so--

KIMBERLY: Yeah, so [INAUDIBLE] from the engineering building, so probably a mile-ish to campus. And it's definitely affordable with my stipend and having a roommate.

It's definitely poss-- it is pretty easy to accommodate any budget you may have. It depends on what you're willing to live--

STEVEN CONKLIN: With.

KIMBERLY: --in. Yeah, because all the new apartment complexes, like if you want something shiny and new, and with a lot of amenities, you're probably looking at a pretty expensive apartment, at least from my point of view, because I come from rural South Carolina from undergrad.

But my apartment complex is older, so it's a little bit more affordable. And someone already asked about a studio or a one bedroom apartment. They are available. They're definitely out there. They are going to be fairly expensive to live by yourself. I think the cheapest I found when I was looking was about \$700 to \$750 a month. But that was-- it had a pretty long wait list to it. So it depends on how much you're willing to spend on it.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Usually the apartments, like the price range that I've seen of apartments if you're going to rent on your own range from \$600 on. It depends what kind of apartment. Like if it has a lot of amenities, it can go as high as \$1,200 or more.

So it's doable. It's doable. You can find a cheap apartment around the area or a cheap location to live in. It all depends on what kinds of things you're looking for, what kind of apartment are you looking for.

So the following question is, are there any dance clubs at Duke University? Specifically, Latin dance and salsa, or Latin dance salsa.

So dance clubs, I know there is. I don't really remember the name-- do you know the name?

KIMBERLY: I think so. It's like [? Icona. ?]

STEVEN CONKLIN: Ico-- something like that. I know SACNAS, which is a society-- gosh, I always forget what they mean-- of Chicanos. So those tend to hold different activities. They do salsa, merengue, tango, and they show these all-- they show you how to dance and teach you. And they also do like competitions and stuff like that.

I'm not sure if they actually use a particular room every time they do those activities. It's usually in front of the Chapel. So it's really fun. It's outdoors, and you get to dance salsa, merengue, and all that stuff. It's pretty nice.

KIMBERLY: There's also 9th Street Dance, which is more of a-- you go and take classes. But they also do salsa. So I'm sure if you wanted to make connections through that.

As an aside, I know you asked about Latin dance, but I really like contradancing, because I'm from the Appalachians. And so there's a lot of that here, too, which is a lot of fun. If you've never done it, you should definitely check it out when you get here.

STEVEN CONKLIN: I should. I haven't. And also, different restaurants hold salsa dancing activities or lessons.

Boop-boop-boop-boop. OK. How much will it cost, in general, for housing? So I guess I mentioned previously, the housing, it depends on what you're looking for, and what amenities are you looking for. It can range between-- the \$600 on. And that's just finding an apartment by yourself. If you share an apartment, then it goes a little bit lower.

So what is the average price of living in a studio or a one bedroom apartment around campus? What is the average cost of food per month? So a studio, the same thing. There's a really long-- well, there might be a really long wait list, so you would have to move quickly.

And the pricing-- you know the pricing. I don't know.

KIMBERLY: So I was originally looking for a one bedroom, and I got quoted, like he said, anywhere from \$750 to like \$1,400 a month, depending on the location you want. Downtown is going to be more expensive. [INAUDIBLE] going to be more expensive.

There are also a fair amount of one bedroom houses that are pretty affordable, depending on what you're looking for.

Let's see. For food, I find it to be pretty reasonable. We have Harris Teeter, Food Lion. There's an organic co-op that I really love. It's a little bit more expensive at the organic co-op, but I know if you qualify for food stamps, they give you a 10% discount, which is really nice and pretty affordable I've found.

STEVEN CONKLIN: The average cost also depends on how-- if you're going to always eat out, and just-- if you're going to have breakfast, lunch, and dinner out, then your cost increases. I guess in my experience, I always bring food. So I bring my lunch, and if I need to, I bring my dinner.

But prices just go around-- I guess, a plate, it depends. If you go to the West Union, you can get a pretty decent plate of food for \$7, \$8 a plate. So it's pretty affordable.

So does the social scene in Durham revolve around Duke, the undergrads, some specific grad schools, or is it quite mixed and balanced?

I would say that it's pretty mixed and balanced. So I don't know. I interact with a lot of different students from different departments, from environmental, law school, business school, any school for that matter, medical school. I think I mentioned that already. But it's quite balanced.

Obviously, there are a lot of societies and lots of groups that you can interact with each other. For instance, there's some STEM groups, like I guess in my case, and I could get to meet new people from different departments.

And also undergrads, they're quite interesting as well. They're pretty energetic, especially when it comes to sports. It's always nice to interact with them, especially during sports activities.

But I would say, overall, it's quite balanced, and it's a pretty nice environment overall.

KIMBERLY: Yeah, so we got this question in advance, and I was really curious. So I actually looked up the stats yesterday, because I'm a nerd. Anyways, so Durham has a population of about 250,000, and about a quarter of those are between the ages of 20 and 35, and only about 15,000 of those are Duke students.

So I found whenever I do stuff in Durham, I mean, I'll usually see people I know and grad students, but it's also a lot of young professionals and people that just like getting out and doing stuff. So I think it's pretty mixed.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, and also, I'm not sure. I guess also for the diversity of the whole community, we are a very international university. There's a big international student component to our graduate program. And there are also some societies for the different international-- I guess-- the countries, or wherever they come from. They tend to have their own society.

So they tend to have these really fun activities, like, for instance, I know every year they do like the international potluck. So people from different countries, they come together, and they make these different-- typical plates of food, and they just share with the whole community. So it's really nice. And not just from the academic perspective, but also in the social component of it. So you get to interact with everyone. It's pretty cool.

So I guess the next question is, how much are the graduate students a part of the university life? Are they more detached, or is there a sense of community, especially for international students?

So I guess, graduate students are a little bit different than undergraduate life, very different. So your priorities are totally different. You tend to detach a little bit from the community. But that's what why it's good to be part of all these societies, all these different student groups, because it pulls you back into interacting with different people.

And as an international student, I guess, I come from Puerto Rico, so my first language is Spanish. So it's always nice to find people that actually speak Spanish, and you can go with them, hang out, and just talk in Spanish, and just be myself, I guess. And it's really cool.

What else? Is there a sense of community? Yes, there's a sense of community. And actually, every department has their own sense of community. They all kind of know each other. At least my department's not that big, so we all know each other, and we hang out. What other component? I'm not sure, do you have anything?

KIMBERLY: There's all kinds of organizations. Like he said, there's-- I know there is an Indian Student Union, then Muslim life at Duke, Jewish Center. So there's definitely ways to get plugged into different communities, but it's also fairly-- Duke fosters a community of like embracing each other and embracing each other's cultures, and really getting to know kind of our different backgrounds.

I know they just put on a Holi celebration that everyone was invited to, and I think a lot of people participated in. So different things like that.

STEVEN CONKLIN: And also another thing, if you guys are interested in just finding out what different student groups are around, I think it's Student Affairs website, or Student Activities. I think it's Student Affairs website, just Google it.

And you can definitely find a lot of different societies or different student groups that you can be a part of. There's even a whole calendar that has all those different groups-- all the activities from all the different groups. And all those that include free food, which is very good.

KIMBERLY: Very important.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Very important for grad school.

So I guess the following question. Are there any activities, like consulting centers, to train students in practical skills?

KIMBERLY: Yeah, so there's actually a PhD Plus program if you're coming into the PhD program that is really helpful in offering different ways for students to not only increase their skills, but explore careers that are available to PhDs in different fields. I found it to be really helpful.

This week they're doing a presentation, or a panel on working in think tanks for science PhDs. And I think last week was social-- or no. This week is science and social science, and last week was humanities.

So there's really resources for everyone in that sense.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, and also, other than that, there are also like development programs. So for instance, if you want to go into academia, like teach, there are some future professoriate programs, or prog-- like certification of-- I guess-- what do you call it? Like prof-- like teaching, like a teaching certificate that you might get throughout your course as a PhD.

So you take some courses, and you teach. You actually teach a course. And at the very end of your PhD, you have a certification that you passed all these courses and you did all these requirements to get a certificate in teaching. So it's pretty cool. And it looks really good on your resume, if you want to go to teach at an institution or even high school or whatever. It's really good.

And there are also lots of other certificates that you can get throughout-- even the CPR, and all those other things. And if you're interested in that, you can just go to our website. And just Google it. And there are a lot of certifications.

So I guess, how much time does it take to get to the beach from Durham?

So like I mentioned previously, we are like in the center of everything. The RTP, which is the Research Triangle, which includes Chapel Hill, Raleigh, and Durham, it's like two hours away from the mountains to the west-- the mountains are to the west-- and two hours away from the beach, which is to the east.

Obviously, it depends on what beach you want to go. There are some that are a little bit further off. It takes a little bit longer. Other than that, it's around [INAUDIBLE].

KIMBERLY: I think two hours to Wilmington, which has a lot of really nice beaches. I just went to Beaufort, which was three and a half, and that was a lot of fun. So it really depends on where you want to go.

STEVEN CONKLIN: The beaches are pretty nice. They're pretty nice.

Would you characterize Durham as a progressive city?

I think we both agree that, yes, it's quite a progressive city. It's still a Southern state, so it will still have somewhat of a Southern charm, I guess, or the way that they-- or Southern behavior.

But it's overall, I really think that is a really progressive city. And the RTP region in general is really, really progressive.

KIMBERLY: Yeah, so North Carolina kind of happens in pockets. So like the cities, so RTP area, Charlotte, Asheville, and Wilmington are all pretty progressive. Outside of that, it gets a little--

STEVEN CONKLIN: Tedious.

KIMBERLY: It's a little different, like any southern state, you know.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Or any other state, for that matter, it happens.

So the next thing, the next question would be, what kind of entertainment options are there in Durham, like for people who don't like basketball? And are there things we'd have to go to Raleigh for?

Even if you-- I know you're saying-- like you mentioned people that do not like basketball, but I don't like basketball, and golly, I've gotten into basketball. This school is definitely going to turn you into a basketball fan.

KIMBERLY: Yeah.

STEVEN CONKLIN: So what is there to do around Durham? Well, there are a lot of things, actually. You can-- well, it depends on what you're looking, what kind of entertainment. If you want to go to the bar, or a brewery, there are a lot of bars and breweries downtown. If you just want to go to restaurants and just enjoy really amazing food, you can go to, I guess downtown as well. That's like also 9th Street, which is really close. It's like five minutes away from campus.

What other things? I guess-- and dancing, there are so many places that have dancing. I would say for clubs and stuff like that, there's some in Durham. But most of them, I think, are in Raleigh, and some of them are also in Chapel Hill.

KIMBERLY: There's a pretty good music scene.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yes, as well.

KIMBERLY: So one of the nice things about the Research Triangle area is each city kind of has its own characteristics. So like Chapel Hill is definitely more college-y. It has a lot of-- it has Franklin Street with a lot of bars, and there's a lot of undergrads, because it's our big state school. And also NC State in Raleigh, but Raleigh is more metropolitan, urban.

That's where you're going to find your more club settings. And there's also a lot of great food and cool museums. There's an art museum in Raleigh that we can get into free, for free on Fridays, which is really neat. And then Durham, I think has a little bit more of a chill vibe, like go to a bar and sit down and hang out.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Right.

KIMBERLY: And there's a lot of events. There's a farmer's market. I've never-- Whenever I've wanted to go out and do something, there's always been something interesting to do.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Well, there definitely is. There's a lot to do. If it's not in Durham, it's in Chapel Hill or Raleigh, or anywhere around the area.

Oh, also like I mentioned at the very beginning, Durham is very big on food trucks. If you enjoy food trucks, or if you would like to get into food truck stuff, it's amazing. If you like food, really good food, quite affordable.

And the food truck rodeo, you have like a huge selection of trucks that you can get food. It's really good. You can have from Jamaican to American food to Spanish food to whatever. You name it. Everything is just about there.

So I guess then the following question, how expensive is it to eat out there?

I guess it depends. You can have really fancy restaurants that can cost like-- I don't know-- \$30 a plate, or you can go to more affordable ones that you can get plates as low as \$7, \$8.

But something I'm going to tell you. It doesn't matter if it's cheap. It's actually very, very good food. And I'm very picky with food. So I'm not sure what your opinion is. At least I've been convinced through my time here.

KIMBERLY: No, I totally agree. You can go out and spend as little or as much as you want, and you're going to leave being just as happy with your experience. So it depends on what you're looking for.

I definitely recommend trying the more expensive restaurants at least once, just because they're interesting and delicious.

STEVEN CONKLIN: It's worth celebrations. I don't know. When you pass your prelim, or your dissertation, or you just want to go on a date. That's always nice.

Where am I? I'm lost.

KIMBERLY: Am I required to finalize housing before moving to Durham?

STEVEN CONKLIN: I would recommend that. I would highly recommend to finalize any housing agreements, because you don't want to come here, and then, oh, you can't find a place. What are you going to do? Especially if you're international, it's a lot harder to find a place.

So well, it's not a lot harder. It's like you're not very familiar with the whole area and how people do things around here, like renting. I know I was not familiar with any of this. So I guess I would highly recommend to finish all those little, small details.

At least in my case, I did all these requirements the month of-- no, actually the month before I moved in. It's not necessary to do it that early on. But at least a couple of weeks before you move in, everything should be like done. I'm not sure if that's your own--

KIMBERLY: Yeah, no, I definitely agree. I think it would be possible. But I think it would be a situation like you never know what's going to be left. And you could either be in a situation where it's not in an area you want, or it's not a high enough quality that you want, or you end up paying a lot more than you would want to.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, and it's all wi--

KIMBERLY: I'm sorry. I was saying finalizing before that can protect you against some of those things.

STEVEN CONKLIN: And I would highly recommend to visit your apartment complex. I know sometimes you can't really visit. I was not able to visit my apartment complex when I rented. I just rented. I just called. Hey, I want a room. Can I get a room? Yay, OK, perfect.

I would highly recommend to visit wherever you're going to rent just in case you don't like the place.

KIMBERLY: Well, that's why, again, people in your department can be really helpful. Because even if they've never seen it, they can direct you to someone who may be able to tell you, yes, this place is great, or, no, this place is horrible. Don't live there. Asking people is definitely a good idea, because they'll give you a straightforward answer.

STEVEN CONKLIN: They'll be very honest with you, which is important.

So by what time do students usually finish their daily classes?

I guess in my program, we only take-- my program, I'm part of the chemistry program. So we take courses. I think it's like 34 credits. So it's usually we all take them the first year. So the first year is mostly classes.

And our classes are usually in the mornings, so by 12:00, or by noon, you're done. So it doesn't-- you have the rest of the day to study, or prepare for your exams, or do something else, take care of your apartment, your dog, cat, like partner or whatever.

KIMBERLY: I think that also really depends on your department. So I'm in-- I take a lot of classes in the school of the environment and civil and environmental engineering, and I'm usually done around 3:00.

But I think-- I remember last semester, I took a class in the business school that didn't end until 5:30 or so. So it really depends on what departments you're taking courses in, and what kind of schedule they typically take.

You can look online. I'm pretty sure Duke's course catalog is open and available, even if you don't have your net ID yet. And you can kind of browse through the classes you might think you want to take.

STEVEN CONKLIN: That's what I did before coming here. I was like, oh, look at all these classes. I'm going to take this, this, this, and this.

And your schedule, I guess in the chemistry department, that's how they do it. Usually all the classes are in the morning. And like she mentioned, some of the classes in the business school or environmental tend to be a little bit later on.

So I would check that online just in case you want to take some other stuff into account.

Are there any study groups?

I guess the-- are there any? I don't think there are any formal study groups, but you're going to form a study group with your classmates during your class. You're definitely-- you might definitely need it eventually. Classes tend to get quite intense, and sometimes you're like, I don't know what I'm doing. I need help. I need some input from someone else.

And that's where study groups come in. And you'll definitely form some. That's how you get to know people and make very good connections with other classmates.

KIMBERLY: I mean, I agree. I've made all my study groups just meeting people in class, and being like, hey, this is really hard. Do you want to get together and go through it together? And I've made a lot of friends that way, too. I definitely recommend doing that, because then you're also making friends that are of similar interests, which is fun.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Are there groups to join for hiking, running, and rock climbing?

And yes, there are. If you go into the Duke website-- I think it's the gym-- there are some running crew people that they do some activities and hiking. I know there's some rock climbing gr-- I guess there are rock climbing groups for the rock wall-- the wall that's in the gym.

And they also have outdoor rock climbing, which is pretty interesting. You just go on a [INAUDIBLE]. You all go rock climbing. They certify you on everything you need to get certified. They provide food. And they provide lots of other things. It's really cool. I would highly recommend to do the rock climbing portion, if you can the outdoors ones.

Other than that, I know there's some-- are there any other clubs?

KIMBERLY: I'm not sure. I haven't really looked into--

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, I know there's a rock climbing center in Cary. Lots of people tend to go there. It's really fun. And you have all these different walls with different intensities,

depending on how quick you are or whatever you want to try, you can go to one or the other, which is pretty nice.

And yeah, there's a lot of-- there's a huge climbing, rock climbing crew, especially in Carrboro area, which is like 10 minutes away, 20 minutes away, close to Chapel Hill.

How long does it take to get to the forest?

I think North Carolina, in general, is a forest. I come from a tropical island, so for me it's a forest. But I guess, forest, what kind of forest--

KIMBERLY: I guess they're talking about Duke Forest. Duke Forest is really close. It's like just down the road. I just passed it the other day. It's pretty easy to get to, and there's a lot of trails and stuff.

STEVEN CONKLIN: The trails are the most fun part. I guess it depends on what you consider a forest. All the trails tend to be like a very woody area, which is what makes it so fun and interesting, because you get to just, woo, I'm running, or I'm hiking, or whatever. And you have all the creeks and rivers and all this stuff all around you. It's just pleasing. Just it's fun. And it's a nice way to relax.

I guess, what are the most wonderful things or days at Duke? What are the most wonderful things or days? I guess--

KIMBERLY: One of things-- oh, sorry.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Go ahead.

KIMBERLY: One of the things we were talking about is Duke Gardens. It's so wonderful. It's like a 10-minute walk from my building. So whenever I just need a break. I need to get away. I can go take a nap, or just sit there and stare into space in the middle of the gardens, which is really nice.

STEVEN CONKLIN: I would totally agree with that. That's a wonderful spot, and I've learned to love it. And it's a good spot to relax.

I guess another wonderful thing, I think the Chapel's just wonderful. It's beautiful, and has been actually renovated-- well, renovations ended like a year ago, but it's renovated.

What else? And I guess another wonderful thing about Duke, other than just things, is like just the community itself is pretty good. I enjoy hanging out. You can even walk around and just stop someone and start talking. Everyone's pretty friendly, and you could just get to know new people. And there are lots of activities every day.

I guess from the days, from the seasons' perspective, for me, my favorite season here so far, well, it's between two. It's spring and fall. Spring because the Duke Gardens and everything starts

blooming, and it's just simply beautiful. And fall, because the leaves start changing colors, which back home, we don't get any of that. So for me, it's like, whoa, look, it's changing colors. It's so nice. I don't know.

KIMBERLY: I agree. I mean spring is beautiful, because Duke [INAUDIBLE] landscaping.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yes.

KIMBERLY: Which might sound like an odd thing to say, but there's really pretty trees that bloom in the spring. And I really like just walking around campus and the gardens when everything's blooming.

STEVEN CONKLIN: OK. What do you not like about living in Durham or around Duke?

I don't live close to Duke. I live a little bit further than other students. I live like around Southpoint Mall, the Streets at Southpoint Mall, which is like 15 minutes away. My reasoning for that is because I didn't want to be too close to Duke, because I know as a grad student, I'm going to be very focused and involved in studying, and doing research, and doing all that stuff. And I don't want undergraduate life preventing me from doing that, or interfering with my studying time.

And another reason is because I want to be far away so I don't get tempted to return and go back to lab and work. So it's like keeping my work life and social life apart.

I'm sure you're a little bit closer.

KIMBERLY: I think the only thing I don't like about living around Durham is the traffic patterns, which might sound odd, but I'm from really rural areas where traffic is there's a tractor in front of me going 15 miles an hour. So that's something that's hard for me to get used to. But I know that might not be the case for everybody.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, I guess for me just to compare, some people say the traffic is horrible here. I come from a place where the traffic is very heavy. It's horrible traffic all the time. And even the freeway, or whatever, I-40, the interstate, which is what I usually take to come here, it's usually open. I guess the slowest that they go is 40 miles per hour, and that is considered here like going-- like a huge traffic. And for me, it's not traffic.

It all depends on where you're coming from. If you come from a city or a place that is heavily populated, it might not be considered as traffic at all. But if you come from a place that there aren't many people and that much traffic, then you would consider this as, oh, my gosh, this is horrible.

Can you speak on campus safety?

So we have Duke Police. They're all over the place. They're also like-- so I guess Duke is pretty safe.

They have different mechanisms to prevent any crime from happening. They have the Duke Police. They have some little, like-- what-- those thingamabobs.

KIMBERLY: They're on a lot of different campuses. They're like these big blue poles, the light at the top, and if you're in trouble, you can go press a button, and it just immediately records you and alerts the police that, hey, something is wrong.

And I think Duke's like any other place in an urban-ish setting. I mean, there's definitely incidences every once in a while. But I would definitely classify that as rare, and not--

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, and the good thing is that the whole system is pretty communicative. They communicate to the students when something happens so you are aware of the situation. So it's pretty nice.

You're not like, oh, I didn't know that that sort of situation happened on campus. Should I be worried about it? They always keep you up to date to what's happening. I guess, yeah, it's pretty safe overall.

It's a college campus. It's a university. Usually, universities tend to attract a little bit of crime, because there are a lot of undergrads and a lot of students walking around, so they can be considered somewhat of an easy target. But overall, it's pretty safe.

KIMBERLY: There's also a free ride service--

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yes.

KIMBERLY: --that Duke offers that will take you. You just have it on your app, and you say, pick me up here. Drop me off here. And it's between 6:00 PM and 6:00 AM.

STEVEN CONKLIN: So how accessible is Uber in Durham-Raleigh for late nights and early mornings?

It's amazing. Uber is quite amazing. You can just get them at any time. It doesn't matter. You just grab your Google-- Google-- your Uber or Lyft app, or whatever, and you can get them just about at any time.

I've had Uber drives-- like rides at 2:00 in the morning, 3:00 in the morning. And I still get them. Sometimes it takes a little bit longer to get, but it's definitely there. Yeah, so it's accessible to both Durham, Raleigh, all the RTP area.

If you go a little bit more on the rural area, maybe not that-- maybe it's a little bit harder. I'm not sure. At least in this area it is.

KIMBERLY: Yeah.

STEVEN CONKLIN: So you want to wrap up?

KIMBERLY: Sure, so it's about that time. Duke's awesome. I really love Durham. That's probably all I have for closing remarks. Thanks for coming and listening.

STEVEN CONKLIN: Yeah, so I guess in my case, for Durham, I think it's a really amazing place to live in, because you not only have all this diversity of different students, the population, you have diversity in food, and lots of different activities that you can enjoy around. It's not just academics. It's more of a social component. It has more of a social component as well.

So with that, I just want to thank you all for, I guess, listening to us answer all your questions. And thank you for attending.

And if y-- I guess, yeah, thank you.