

## LIFE IN DURHAM

The video of this chat can be found online at <http://gradschool.duke.edu/about/news/live-chat-life-durham>. Questions are in **boldface** type.

STACY (MODERATOR): Hello and welcome to the Life in Durham live chat. I'm Stacy Torian, I work at the Office of Admissions at the Duke University Graduate School. I'm very happy, uh, that you all are joining us today for this. I have four graduate students with me who are ready to share their knowledge of Durham and can't wait to get started. Just wanted to go over, uh, some things before we launch right into the questions and answers. First of all, we will be recording the session. Um, I will be sharing that, um, recording link with you at the end of the session, um, and that link will be available on our website after the session is over, so be on the lookout for that. I also wanted to, uh, thank everyone who sent in questions in advance. We have quite a number of questions that we received in advance. We'll be focusing on those, uh, first so don't be surprised if, um, when you look at the question and answer panel, you see questions that aren't being answered right away. It's because we're answering the advance questions first, um, so, uh, I just want you to be aware of that. Uh, we're also going to be focusing on the questions about Durham and life in Durham. We received some great questions about academics, uh, campus life, and those types of things, um, but we really want this session to be focused on Durham and life in Durham so those, uh, questions that are about Durham will be prioritized. So, um, with that said, why don't we launch right into our introductions, um, and then we'll go ahead and start answering questions. Uh, Andre?

ANDRE: Yeah, my name is Andre Van Ryn Bach. I'm a fourth-year PhD student in Electrical and Computer Engineering, and I'm from Charlotte, North Carolina.

LAUREN L: My name is Lauren Lowman, I'm a second-year PhD student in Civil and Environmental Engineering, and I'm originally from Delaware.

LAUREN B: My name is Lauren Burianek. I'm a fourth-year PhD student in Cell Biology, and I'm originally from Charlotte, North Carolina.

WENHAN: My name is Wenhan Qiu. I'm from China, and, um, I'm a second-year master's student, um, in Environmental Engineering.

LAUREN L: Alright, well, I'll start us off with our first question. Uh, is there, **is a car necessary for daily life and, if yes, how is the parking commissioned on campus?** Um, a car is not necessary for daily life if you live very close to campus, either in downtown Durham or, um, in like the American, uh, what's that called the American Tobacco...?

ANDRE: American Tobacco...

LAUREN L: American village, um.

ANDRE: Or just west of campus.

LAUREN L: Yeah. So, if, there are a lot of buses, that you can get around either the Duke buses or um, Durham buses, but I'd say having a car makes it easier especially for grocery shopping, or if you want to get out of town, go hiking, or something like that. Um, and if you have a car and you want to park, the first two years, um, you're probably going to be on a waiting list for a parking, uh, for a parking permit, but, um, you can get one that's a little, in like a remote lot, so then you will just have to take a Duke bus regardless. Um, and if anyone wants to add anything.

ANDRE: Yeah, um, a lot of students who don't have cars live just west of campus, um, where there is a Duke bus, uh, called the LaSalle Loop, which rides from campus past several apartments and up onto Hillsborough Road, where there is a grocery store, restaurants, and shops, and back and uh, that runs, I think, every hour and it's free, of course. So, that's a popular option for students without cars. Okay, uh, the next question is **what are the public transportation options in Durham?** Uh, so fortunately Durham has a, in my opinion, a good public transportation system. Uh, it has what's called the DATA bus, Durham Area Transit Authority, and, uh, those buses are part of a larger Triangle Transit Authority, TTA, and any of those buses are, uh, now free for Duke students, so you can get a, uh, GoPass, which will get you free ridership. And uh, the buses, there are several buses, mainly the 6 and the 11 bus stop around campus. Um, the 6 bus goes west of campus, so there are apartments up there and, uh, shopping centers, and the 11 bus tends to stay, uh, north and west of campus. Um, for anything farther, uh, you can go to the bus station and transfer there to uh, Raleigh. Um, there is also a bus that runs to Chapel Hill, um, every hour during the school year. It's, uh, it runs from Duke's campus to Chapel Hill's campus. Um, so yeah, the good thing is that, generally, you can get around Durham with, uh, just the buses and they're free.

LAUREN B: And in addition to buses, uh, Durham also has an Amtrak station. Uh, so you can use that if you're looking to get out of town for decently cheap. You can take the Amtrak up to D.C., you can take it down to Charlotte. Uh, it's got a pretty good connectivity on the east coast.

WENHAN: Yes

LAUREN L: Yeah. And I'll just throw out there, there's also Megabus here.

WENHAN: Megabus.

LAUREN L: That will get you everywhere (laughing).

LAUREN B: Alright, uh, number three. **How expensive is the food and restaurants, fast food, and what do most people have for breakfast?**

WENHAN: (laughing)

LAUREN B: (laughing) Um, so the food isn't all that expensive. Um, if you're looking for cheap, you can get cheap. If you're looking for a really, really nice expensive meal, you can also get that. Um, it just kind of goes based on what you want to pay. Uh, I would say that fast food is probably comparable to everywhere else in the States. Um, you can get a meal for 5, 6 dollars. Um, if you're looking for something above that, um, Durham is actually known for its food. Um, so we have a lot of really unique Durham restaurants and, um, they're fairly priced and about once or twice a year we have something called Triangle Restaurant Week, in which a lot of the restaurants within the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area will provide discounts for a set menu. Uh, so you can go and explore some of the more expensive places while still being on a budget. And as far as what do most people have for breakfast, um, that's about as variable as anywhere else. Um, I personally like to have bacon and eggs, but, I can be a morning person and get up and actually cook that. Uh, some people stick with cereal or granola bars and some people just forgo breakfast all together.

WENHAN: Yes. I think the food price in Durham is kind of expensive when it compares to, uh, I live in China cause food in China is kind of cheap. Uh, but I should say, when it compares to some large cities in America, the food price is kind of, um, not so expensive. And, uh, for me, for breakfast, I have, uh, a leasing office, uh, who can offer, um, the food for free, so yeah. I can join in the group and enjoy the, enjoy my breakfast if I want and if I can get up early (laughing). So okay, uh, so next question is **what are the best place to get fresh foods, such as pro, pro...**

LAUREN B: **Produce**

WENHAN: **Produce. Sorry. Produce and eggs, fish and so on?** I think my recommendation is Whole Foods, in the, um, just between the West Campus and the East Campus. The Whole Foods pro, um, provides very good and, uh, high-standard products. And uh, for international students, especially for students from China, Japan, Korea, I think Li Ming's uh, it's just, uh, two miles away from the West Campus. It's also a good place to find uh, um, Asian food, I think. It's also very fresh and in good quality.

LAUREN B: And to add onto that, we also have a lot of farmers' markets in the area. Uh, Durham Farmers' Market is outstanding, um, and there are also things called CSA's, which is Community Supported Agriculture, and so what you can do is, uh, pay for a share of the farm in the beginning of the season and you'll get a box of vegetables, meats and eggs every week for the duration of the season. I personally get mine through Brinkley Farms and um, you can choose farms that are organic if that's what you want, choose farms that have eggs, have meat, that they've raised themselves. Um, so that's also a good option.

LAUREN L: Alright, our next question is **how does the cost of living match the quality of life in Durham? Do you feel like you can manage your expenses comfortably?** I would say that, the cost of living in Durham is pretty low, which is really nice. Um, if you get a stipend, um, which, uh, I think most PhD students do and some master's students do, uh, you will live very,

very comfortably. Um, housing prices very close to campus can be a little bit more expensive, but as you go farther out, um, it becomes very reasonable. Uh, if you, you know, mostly, grocery, go to the grocery store and make your own food then your, um, food expenses will be very cheap. And, um, what I always tell people is that I never feel like I can't afford whatever I want to buy. So, I feel like I live very comfortably here. Um, I never feel like I don't have enough money based on just my stipend, alone. Um.

\*\*10:07\*\*

ANDRE: Okay, the next question. **How can I get a driver's license? How long does it take to get a driver's license?** Um so, you have to go to the Department of Motor Vehicles, the DMV, here in Durham and if you have a license from another state, then you just have to take the driver's, the written driver's test for North Carolina which is a multiple-choice test, um, which you do have to study for because the questions can get pretty detailed.

WENHAN: (laughing)

ANDRE: They give you, they give you a book. Um, if you have, uh, a driver's license from a foreign country, I think you also actually have to take the driving test, where they um, you go out on the road with the instructor and you do some basic driving maneuvers and they, uh, decide whether you are competent enough to get a driver's license at that point. And you can retake any of those tests if you, uh, happen to not pass the first time. And, uh, in terms of cost, I don't think it's that expensive. Maybe, uh, 50, somewhere between 50 to 70 dollars total.

LAUREN L: Yeah, I'll just add, if you are coming from another state and changing your driver's license, which I did, you do still have to take, like uh, a sign test, and uh, and you have to take a computer test and you should study a little bit for it because there are a lot of questions that are specific North Carolina laws related to, like, mostly alcohol and driving, so um, you know, like how much time you get if you get a DUI, so you should actually study even if you're coming from another, another state.

WENHAN: Yes, um, I think if you, um, from, like a, from foreign country, like me from China, I have, I have a driver's license in China, but it still took me like one month to get used to traffic rules in the States. And uh, my suggestion would be, you can apply for the learning permit first and if you also hold an international driver's license, you can legally, uh, drive, uh, in the state. Um, then maybe, after two to three months, you, um, kind of get used to the traffic rules in the state, you can apply for the formal driver's license if you want.

LAUREN B: Alright, the next question. **Where in Durham do you live? Where have you lived in past semesters and where have you been the happiest?** Um, so I actually went to UNC for undergraduate so I've been in this area for about eight years now, um, and for the past five years I have been in Southwest Durham near Southpoint Mall, which is off of I-40. Um, it was about a nine-mile drive to campus. Um, but it's a very safe location, um, you're right by the mall. You're

around a lot of restaurants and it's very convenient to get wherever you want. Um, but I recently just moved to Northeast Durham, um, into an old house and I'm renting that. Um, and I love having the space and I love the quaintness of the neighborhood. Um, it's a quiet street, which I also like, and, um, a lot of the older houses sometimes you can rent for cheaper than apartments, which is really nice. Um, and I like how close I am to campus. Um, that's a lot easier. Um, and I like the, it has more of a unique feel rather than more of a suburban feel that you get kind of in Southwest Durham. Anybody else?

WENHAN: Uh, so next question is, **what is the easiest way to find a roommate when renting a two-bedroom apartment?** Okay, uh, I think there are lots of social medias, uh, you can use, like Facebook, and uh, you can name it. But, I would suggest, you can Google search the gu, the DukeList and on the DukeList you can find the, um, someone who want to rent a bedroom as well so you can talk with those guys if you want. So you can just Google search, uh, for the DukeList.

LAUREN B: You can also talk to the admissions director of your program, um, and have them send out an email to a list of incoming students within your program and see if anybody else is looking for a roommate. I know some people who have done that, that way they have a roommate of somebody who is in their program coming in, um, if you're looking for someone before you get here and get acquainted with everybody.

\*\*14:52\*\*

LAUREN L: Alright, our next question is, **what would be the best way to buy furniture quickly? Where can I buy good furniture at a reasonable price?** Um, when I first got here, I think I bought most of my furniture off of Craigslist. It's really easy, there are a lot of people that post and um, and you can get furniture sometimes for free, sometimes you can get it, a whole bedroom set, for under a hundred dollars. So, I think that's typically the easiest way to go, but if you're looking, I don't know, for, for something newer then you can go to Ikea in Charlotte or, um, Target or Walmart sell pretty cheap furniture around here.

LAUREN B: And now I think we are waiting for questions.

ANDRE: Yeah.

LAUREN L: I think that I'll add to the last question about where you live in Durham and, um, where have you lived in the past semesters. So, I have also been here for nine years or so cause I was an undergrad here as well (laughing), um, so I was in downtown Durham, um, and it's really nice because it's, it's so convenient, you can walk everywhere um, and um, it's pretty safe. There are a lot of restaurants, there's a lot to do. But now I live in Southwest Durham and I really, really like it. Um, I feel, I do a lot of like outdoor activities. I bike and I play tennis, and I think it's, it's really easy to just get to open roads there and get to green spaces. Um, and I really like it. I think that, that the housing can be a little cheaper the farther out that you go, so that's nice.

ANDRE: Yay, we have another question now. **Give some introduction about the gym or jogging route of Duke.** Um, yeah so, the most popular jogging trail I know is called the Al Buehler trail which is just across the, the street here from Duke's campus. It surrounds the Duke golf course actually and it, it's a trail through the woods. It's like 2, 2.1 miles or, or something around that, and uh, a lot of people jog or walk on that trail. There's a, a number of other trails just around campus in the Duke Forest. Duke owns a whole area just west of campus, uh, that's, maintains it as a forest for our research and there are also many trails in there that uh, I've been on. Um, and uh, then there's the gyms at Duke, which for PhD students, I think, are included in the stipend. I'm not sure how much it costs for other students. But um, the gyms are really high quality, um, they're excellent facilities. There's the main one on West Campus and a smaller one on East Campus, but it has a pool, fitness classes, machines. Um, it's really good.

LAUREN L: Yeah. And there is also the American Tobacco Trail, which is like a long greenway in Durham. It goes all the way from North Durham all the way down to, I mean, almost,

LAUREN B: (17:58) Hillsborough

WENHAN: (17:59) Hillsborough

LAUREN L: (17:59) Hillsborough. Yeah, really far. So, I mean, if you want to run for a very, very long time.

WENHAN: (laughing)

LAUREN L: Yeah (laughing)

LAUREN B: So the next question is, **how many gyms are on campus? How do I register for the fitness and sports classes, such as yoga, tennis, etc.?** Uh, so we've already kind of answered the first part. Um, there is the large gym on West Campus and the smaller one on East Campus. Most graduate students would probably be using the West Campus one, um, unless they are in humanities. Some humanities classes are on East Campus. Um, as far as registering for classes, um, if you're talking about like a semester-long tennis type course, um, those you can register for when you register for your classes for your program. If you're talking about like fitness programs that happen once or twice a week throughout, you know, the, the semester, those you just kind of show up and it's first come, first serve. Um, I think with some of the cycling classes, you might have to, um, just kind of RSVP a spot, um, just because those fill up fast, but other than that, they are, uh, free for all.

WENHAN: Yeah.

ANDRE: Yeah, go to the, um, the website for the, um, the Duke gym and, um, they'll have all of the classes there and you can, uh, sign up online.

LAUREN B: Right

WENHAN: Yes.

ANDRE: So like yoga, or, or whatever type of fitness classes.

LAUREN L: Yeah, most of them are drop-in too, but if you do sign up for one of the semester-long classes, it is pass/fail, so if you don't show up, you will fail the class (laughing).

WENHAN: (laughing)

LAUREN B: (laughing)

LAUREN L: So just keep that in mind.

LAUREN B: And one other thing about the gym. Um, as mentioned, your stipend covers the cost of the gym. Um, however there is an opt-in program now, um, I think because of budgetary reasons, so if you actually do want to be enrolled in the gym, they will send you an email saying do you want to opt-in to the fitness, um, program and then you just say, yes, I want to be in, and that will take care of it. And that covers as long as you are a, uh, funded PhD student, um so that's technically your first five years, uh, for most programs, and then after that you have to pay a small fee. But I don't think that it's, it's maybe like a hundred bucks for the year or something like that.

\*\*20:18\*\*

WENHAN: Yeah, I think it's a hundred. Kind of a hundred, cause for master's students, we need to pay for recreation fee, includes, uh, uh, maybe fees for the gyms. It costs like two hundred dollars for one semester, I think. Okay, next question. Uh, **I've heard from some people that Durham has some questionable areas as far as safety goes. How is safety on campus and around it?** Okay (laughing), yeah, no, I think for me when I arrived in Durham, um, as a first time, um, as a first days, some, some people suggest me never go out when, uh, it's really late in the night cause, um, you know, there are some questionable areas in Durham. But, you know what? Um, I tried. I tried to go around, um, and uh, on the campus and around it, uh, very late in the night. Uh, I find, okay. It's okay. Yeah so, my suggestion would be just, um, just take care of yourself and, um, try it. I, I, mean, the night in Durham is very attractive for me.

LAUREN B: I think, just to add onto that, um, just like any cities, we have our high crime areas. Um, those would probably be just east of campus. Um, just be aware, you know? Don't have headphones and stuff in. Make sure that you're aware of your possessions and your surroundings. Um, the Durham Police are absolutely fantastic.

WENHAN: Yes.

LAUREN B: And so are the campus police. And everywhere on campus, there are blue light boxes, so if at any point you don't feel safe, you just hit one of those, and they'll send somebody out immediately. Um, I would say on campus, it's, it's pretty safe. Downtown, where all the

restaurants and stuff are, you're fine. And um, Southwest Durham, near the mall and everything, everything is pretty safe around there. Um, just be aware of your surroundings.

WENHAN: Yes.

LAUREN L: Alright, the next question. **Where can I dance salsa?**

WENHAN: (laughing)

LAUREN L: I love this question actually. Um, I, I actually used to dance a lot of salsa. So there are a lot places around here that have salsa nights, uh, which is awesome. Uh, you can usually find them just going to like the Durham, uh, County, not the Durham County, but there's like a Durham activities website and they usually list a lot of the local restaurants do it. One is, uh, Little Havana, which is in Downtown Durham, um, but there are a bunch in Downtown Durham that do it. There are a bunch in Chapel Hill that do it. I mean, you can probably find a place to dance salsa every single night. Um, the, there's a pretty large Hispanic community here and so, if you don't want to dance salsa, you also want to tango, I mean, there's everything here. It's really awesome.

LAUREN B: To add to that, you can join the Facebook group Triangle Latin Dancers. Um, and that will come up with all of the salsa, merengue, tango nights there are, ever (laughing).

WENHAN: (laughing)

ANDRE: Next question. **Is there a live music scene in Durham?** Uh, yes actually, and not only Durham but the Triangle Area in general is a really good hotspot for live music and, uh, up-and-coming bands. So, it's really good for that. Uh, in Durham, the, the place I can think of, uh, off the top of my head is, uh, Motorco in, uh, Northeast Durham. Um, Pinhook also is a bar that has some music. Uh, Duke has a lot of, uh, performances and, uh, there's music in the Gardens during the summer, where they, uh, have live music and in, in the Duke Gardens they have Duke performances throughout the year. And uh, even the Triangle Area, Chapel Hill, has a lot. There's a place called Cat's Cradle in Carrboro which has a lot of good live music, um, and then over in Raleigh, uh, they have some bigger venues like, uh, Walnut Creek and, uh, that could host like bigger, uh, bigger names. But yeah, in general, there's lots of music, lots of bands, in just the Triangle Area, including Durham.

WENHAN: Yeah, um, FY, just, FYI, I think you can buy tickets from the ticket office in Bryan Center.

LAUREN B: Yes.

ANDRE: For the Duke performances. Right?

\*\*24:50\*\*



LAUREN B: Mhm. Number 15. **Is Durham a dog-friendly city?** Yes! And I love it! I have two dogs (laughing). Um, and a lot of my friends have dogs too. There are a lot of different dog parks. Uh, the vets are amazing in this area. Um, you can't bring them in to all restaurants, but a lot of restaurants especially in the summer time have outside seating areas that you can bring them in. Um, we have a brewery called Fullsteam that doesn't actually serve food so you're allowed to bring dogs in, so in the winter time that is a good place to bring your pup with you. Um, all of the running trails and stuff are great to bring them out and get exercise and everybody always loves seeing a dog running around on campus. So (laughing).

WENHAN: Uh, okay.

LAUREN B: I'm done. Yeah.

WENHAN: Okay, so next question is, **is Durham a bike-friendly city?** I, I should say yes. Um, you can absolutely enjoy cycling on the campus and on, around, the campus. Um, and uh, there are some specific areas on campus for park, uh, the bikes, uh, safely. I think. Um, does anyone want add some sort of response?

LAUREN B: Yeah, so um, Durham isn't the most bike-friendly city, but it is definitely making it a priority to get there. They have been renovating a lot of roads to put in more bike lanes. Um, there are still some roads that are more heavily trafficked and harder to get on. Um, make sure, basic safety, if you're riding at night make sure you have bike clothing or reflective gear and lights. Um, most vehicles are pretty respectful of cyclists on the road, um, but just as anywhere, you get the one or two people that aren't going to be as respectful, telling you to get on the sidewalk and things, um, but you just have to do your best, to let those go. Um, around campus though it's great and in the immediate vicinity around campus. It's when you start getting a little bit past that, probably about a mile away from campus or more, that biking gets a little bit harder.

LAUREN L: Okay, our next question is, **how is the gym in Duke? Does every student have free access or do we need to pay an annual fee to have access? Is, are there any squash courts open to students who are not in the club?** Um so, I think we said before that the, the gym, if you, uh, you have to opt-in, but uh, and you'll see like the charge on your bill, but it will be paid by the Graduate School as long as you opt-in. So, it is free to, to graduate students, um, you don't have to pay. It's nice, the, the, the gym on West Campus, Wilson, is huge! There are a bunch of ellipticals, treadmills, there's a huge weight room, um, there's a pool, an Olympic pool, so if you like swimming, um, and there are, uh, squash and handball courts if you want to play there. Um, I'm not sure if you have to register, to like, reserve them in advance, but I know that you don't have to pay for them. You may have to reserve them in advance, but they have the squash balls there and everything.

ANDRE: Uh, next question. **What is the bar scene like? I've heard that there is not much of a scene in Durham and you have to get to Chapel Hill.**

WENHAN: (laughing)

LAUREN L: (shaking head, mouthing No)

ANDRE: Uh, yeah, this is not actually the case. Um, so maybe, that perception is for, um, undergraduate-heavy bars. I think there's this one bar in Durham, that Chapel Hill has many more. But for grad students, I think the bar scene in Durham is really good, if not better than Chapel Hill. Uh, in, in addition to the bars on Main Street, where you find, um, quite a few grad students, um, like Alivia's or James Joyce, uh, a lot of, there's also, uh, some bars that few, fewer people have heard about on 9<sup>th</sup> Street, which is close to campus and, uh, of course, Fullsteam, as Lauren mentioned is really popular among grad students. You go there any weekend night and you'll see lots of grad students there. It's like a great environment. And so uh, I think there are a lot of really good and active places in Durham which are within a mile, a mile and a half, of campus. Um, if you're into like, more of the dance club scene, then yeah, you have to go to Chapel Hill. They don't have that in Durham really. But um, otherwise, in terms of just like casual and, um, good atmosphere bars, I think, uh, Durham is really great for that.

LAUREN B: And there are also a couple of bars on campus, just throwing that out there.

WENHAN: (laughing)

LAUREN L: Oh, really?

LAUREN B: Yeah, there's the, uh, it's down in the Bryan Center.

LAUREN L: Oh, The Loop (laughing).

ANDRE: In The Loop.

WENHAN: Yeah.

LAUREN B: Uh, so number 19. **I want to know about the atmosphere of society near Durham. What is the cultural geography of Durham?** So, I like this question a lot. Um, you'll notice, I guess if you were to spend a lot of time here, that all of the members of the Triangle, so Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, and its, uh, neighbors, Cary and Apex, they all kind of have their individual atmospheres. Um, and so, Durham, has a nickname called Dirty Durham, and it's not dirty in the way of not clean, it's dirty in the sense that it's just raw. Um, so Durham has a lot of history behind it, uh, and a lot of the restaurants and bars in the area have been renovated from old warehouses. Um, so Durham is not one of those towns that have all of these regulations about sign height and, um, you know, what color the front of your building has to be and things like that, um so it's very relaxed, um and I guess you can say almost hipstery in a sense?

LAUREN L: (laughing)

\*\*30:46\*\*

LAUREN B: Um, Chapel Hill is full of undergrads, um, and if you go over to Cary, Cary is very suburban, soccer-mom, lots of minivans (laughing).

WENHAN: Yeah (laughing).

LAUREN B: And you know, black mailboxes in exactly the same spot on every lawn (laughing). Um, but Durham just has this culture of uniqueness, where everybody can find a way to fit in. Um, no matter what you're interested in, no matter, you know, what you want to portray yourself as, there's, uh, a niche for you.

ANDRE: Yeah, to add to that. It seems to me, uh, compared to other cities, that there's a lot of like civic pride for people who live in Durham because, uh, it's kind of like they can, it's sort of, make it into, uh, you can find a niche and make it into your own. And uh, like Lauren was saying, a lot of it has been renovated from old warehouses and so there's kind of like a do-it-yourself mentality here in Durham, where like anything you want to build or, or, or do, or organization that kind of like comes up from, uh, uh, a grassroots thing. And it's, it's pretty cool to see like a lot of the changes that have happened, even in the, uh, you know, several years that I've been here.

WENHAN: Yeah, I think, for me, I really enjoy the diverse cultures in Durham and I think it's very acceptable for all the foreigners from different countries. We can find, um, like different communities or a different place to fit in very perfectly. I really like the environment in Durham, I think. Okay, um, so next question is, **how easy is it to go sightseeing around Durham without a car?** I should say, um, it's not kind of so easy if you want to go sightseeing around the campus, uh, if, without a car. Uh, I mean, of course, there are lots of public transportations in Durham and on the campus, uh, but it's mostly, it's, uh, to one point to another point directly. But if you want to go out, uh, go out seeing, I should say, um, Duke and the Durham, um, uh, locates in the forest, so, sometimes you will get lost. Uh, yeah, so, I mean, it's better to ask someone who has cars to take you around.

LAUREN B: Well it kind of depends on if you want to do all of your sightseeing in one day or if you kind of want to do it bit-by-bit, because if you want to do it bit-by-bit it's kind of easy, um, in the sense that it's easy to get from Duke's campus to, let's say, the, uh, baseball stadium or Duke's campus to the American Tobacco District, but it's harder to get from the Tobacco District to the baseball stadium. Um, so if you just want to go bit-by-bit, it's pretty easy. You can take the bus there, walk around, take the bus back. Um, we have probably about three or four main districts where you'd probably want to go sightseeing off-campus. Um, you know, to go and try the food and look around at the, the building décor and do shopping and stuff.

LAUREN L: Alright, our next question is, **is there a strong sense of community among graduate and professional students at Duke?** If so, in what ways have you seen this demonstrated? Um, I guess I can only really speak to my department, which I think there, I mean, um, the Pratt School of Engineering, and I think there is a very strong sense of community

among all of the students there. Um and, every Friday we have like uh, a department beer hour, um, and it's free beer and usually free food, and um, it's not just limited to Pratt students, other students from other departments can come too. But uh, it's really nice because you can just, you know, Friday, you're tired, it's the end of the week, you can just mingle and meet new people. Um, there's also a, uh, uh, like a graduate student committee that organizes a lot of outings and events for grad students, um, from all departments, uh, which is really nice. Um, they organize like, uh, going to Durham Bulls baseball games together, um, and like pub crawls and things like that. So yeah, there is a very strong sense of community.

ANDRE: Yeah, I think, uh, uh, I'll add to that by saying that, uh, a lot of, uh, grad students get together through, uh, through Graduate & Professional Student Council called, uh, you'll hear shortened to GPSC.

LAUREN L: Yeah.

ANDRE: Which, uh, organizes lots of events almost weekly and they're well attended by students from all departments. Uh, and including, uh, quite popular is the campout event, which includes, I think, several thousand grad students, all together for one weekend sleeping in tents or RVs, so you really get close and, uh, meet people, uh, through that and, uh, subsequent basketball games, uh, tend to be a good place to meet other grad students. Uh, next question. **I've heard some students get DirecTV rather than Time Warner Cable because it is cheaper. Have you used DirecTV? Do you recommend it?** I've never used DirecTV, uh, I don't know much about it. I do know that Time Warner Cable is very frustrating (laughing).

WENHAN: (laughing)

ANDRE: And uh, they, whatever rate you sign in your first year, be prepared that once that year ends, it will probably double. Um, so, uh, if you can find a good alternative that fits your needs, like DirecTV, then, by all means. Um, though, I, I can't comment though on DirecTV.

\*\*36:36\*\*

LAUREN L: I'll, I'll chip in here. So, uh, it's very hard to get DirecTV because Time Warner Cable kind of has a, uh, monopoly in the area, probably most of North Carolina actually. Um, so it's, it's pretty difficult especially if you're renting. Um, if you buy then you can probably get DirecTV but otherwise you'll probably be stuck with Time Warner Cable. Um, like Andre said, after a year, the rate will go up, but, uh, what I always do is when that happens, I call them and they usually have a new discount to give me and it lowers the rate again, so if you're willing to be patient, then you can sort of work through it. But, yeah, you're kind of stuck with Time Warner Cable.

LAUREN B: I'll add. Um, there's actually a couple of alternatives to both DirecTV and Time Warner and so I actually cut Time Warner out completely about two years ago and switched to

Frontier. Um, so there is Frontier and there is also U-verse, which is run by AT&T, that are in the area and they go through the phone lines instead of through the cable and you can get them really easily if you're renting as well. Um, I actually personally don't have cable anymore because I use my Internet to get Netflix and Hulu and I haven't really found the need for it. Um, but, I've had nothing but, you know, fantastic, uh, things to say about Frontier. They, it's pretty fast service, it's, for just the Internet, just \$40 a month, um, and that's more than enough to stream anything you want. Uh, so the next question. **Can you tell me about your first year as a new graduate student? Challenges, transition, and maybe useful information that you can pass on?**

WENHAN: (laughing)

LAUREN B: Um, so if you're going to be mainly on West Campus, my biggest piece of advice is as soon as you decide you're coming to Duke, get on the Circuit waitlist, um, for parking, because it will take you about three years to get it and that's probably the epitome of being a senior graduate student is once you get Circuit parking. Otherwise, I would just say be open. Um, if you're in a program that does any kind of laboratory rotations, really be open to, you know, trying out different types of research. You only get your first year once (laughing), um, and once you decide on a dissertation topic, you're kind of, kind of locked in. Um, you know, and also explore with your classes. I mean, obviously take the classes that you need in order to, to get your degree, but, you know, if you have any type of leeway, you know, expand your horizons a little bit, because once you're out of grad school, that's the last chance you get for really, you know, taking these courses and being able to, to suck in all the knowledge that you can.

ANDRE: Yeah and the other thing I'll add is, uh, what, what was challenging, for me at least, was, uh, finding a balance between, uh, the coursework and understanding, uh, expectations for research. And uh, so just make sure you're clear. I know, I know a lot of students who kind of ran into, uh, difficulties with this. Make sure you're clear, if you do have an advisor doing research, what they expect in terms of your time commitment to your lab versus your time commitment to courses because in your first year, you're generally having, uh, a pretty full course load and you just need to understand what the expectations are. And it's a good idea to talk it over in the beginning.

LAUREN L: Mhm.

ANDRE: Yeah.

\*\*40:05\*\*

LAUREN L: And also make sure you're really good with your time management because you're going to be very busy between courses and starting a new research project that includes like a lot of background reading. Um, and then also if you don't already have a fellowship, you're likely going to have to be applying for fellowships. So, I mean, you're going to have very little free

time, so really work on your time management skills because that's going to be important for the first year.

WENHAN: Yes, the most challenging thing for my first year is, or at least the last year is, uh, are two things, I think. Uh, first is the culture gap and second is the language gap. I think, uh, at Duke, we have lots of place we can ask help from and, uh, for cultural gap I usually go to the International House and, uh, find the officer in the International House to answer my questions about what's different, uh, between U.S. and uh, China. And for language, uh, gap, um, there are lots of professors and teachers in, tutors, in my department and also the Pratt School will offer help. So, um, and uh, the next question. **I am entering a graduate program with only ten other students, what is the best way to meet and form relationship with graduate students from other departments?** Okay, well, I share the exactly same experience with you, I should say. I enter, uh, a program that has like, uh, three, yeah, three other students (laughing). Yeah, for, for my program, but uh, um, first of all, um, I can meet, um, other graduate students through the orientation. Uh, and they are, when you enter, uh, when you come to Duke, you will find, oh, for the first one to two weeks, you need to attend lots of orientations from International House, from the Duke school and from your department, uh, so, uh, don't worry about these kind of opportunities. And uh, second, uh, we, even though we just in the, in, in one program with limited, uh, classmates, uh, with limited, um how do you say, you can say classmate, um, but you can also choose, uh, lots of, um, courses from different departments, different programs, so by doing this you can meet lots of other graduate students, if you want.

LAUREN B: There are also a lot of graduate student, uh, organizations that are kind of under the GPSC that we were talking about earlier, um, and they range from all sorts of different interests. Um, I currently run what we call DukeOUT, which is the LGBT-friendly group, uh, that goes over all of the graduate school. But there's also ones, um, for pretty much any interest. And then there are a lot of groups that aren't, are managed by undergrads, but they aren't exclusively for undergraduates. So if you're really interested in any kind of activism or, uh, salsa dancing or anything, there are groups, tons of groups that you can join. I'm sure they'd be more than willing to have you.

LAUREN L: Okay, next question. Um, **how long does it generally take to find an apartment and how far in advance should you be looking?** Um, this question really depends on what you're looking for in an apartment, and um, you know, if you want to be in a specific building or if you want to be in a specific location in Durham. I mean, if you're open to living anywhere, then it, I can't imagine it will take very long, um but, I mean, I would probably say give it two months in advance at least to start looking. But I think I'm going to defer to my other grad students because I have to admit that I haven't looked for a new place in many, many years so if you could jump in (laughing).

ANDRE: You can, you can find, uh, you just have to call the apartments and, uh, they'll each have a different date. They may have an apartment, have an apartment open, uh you know, in uh,

a week, a month, or it could be like two or three months, it just depends on when people are leaving their apartments. So um, you just have to call or, the apartments and it could be anywhere from a week, like I said, to several months. You can reserve one.

\*\*44:55\*\*

LAUREN B: And if you're open to other ideas than apartments, if you're looking to rent a house or something like that, um, my biggest piece of advice would be, you, you can't look too far in advance because if you look too far in advance, then they don't want to give the house to you because they're losing money on their mortgage during that time. Um, so unless you find somebody two weeks, or two months, ahead of time that's planning on moving out and you sign a lease before they even move out, um, you pretty much have to be willing to move in within 30 days. Um, so when I was looking for the house, I moved in in May but I started looking in February and I just got turned down all over the place because they were looking for somebody to come, you know, as soon as possible. Okay.

ANDRE: Okay, next question. **Are there any academic/social clubs that you recommend that I join?** Well, fortunately, Duke is a big school and there's plenty of academic and uh, social clubs. And uh, what you'll find actually is that, uh, Duke is, actually has more graduate students than undergraduate students. So uh, any of these clubs that you can find on campus, even if they are undergrad clubs, most of them have actually grad students as a part of them. So, whatever your interests are, don't uh, don't be shy to go to the club and join, uh, and be active because, uh, a lot of them actually have grad students and some are primarily grad students, but there's not really a distinction made often times, uh, with many clubs. And uh, yeah, the other thing is, uh, the, uh, GPSC, Graduate & Professional Student Council, sends out a weekly email with the, the events of all the clubs that are specifically run by grad students. Um, I run a club which does volunteer once a month with, uh, the Durham Habitat for Humanity and I advertise through the GPSC, so if you're interested in volunteer work and wanted to join that club, um, you would hear about it primarily through the, uh, GPSC email. But there's also a student activities center website at Duke and like I said, even if it doesn't say grad students, generally there are grad students in all these clubs because they are a big presence on, on the campus here.

LAUREN B: Okay. Um, **what are your favorite activities outside of Durham?** I've heard it's about two to three hours from the beach and the mountains, any favorite spots? Yes, and that's one of the things I love about North Carolina. Um, so I'm a big hiker and backpacker. Um, one of my favorite trails is probably about three and a half hours west of here in the Mount Pisgah area, um, just west of Asheville. Um, and there's a trail called the Art Loeb Trail, which is absolutely gorgeous and it's basically a 360-degree view all the way around, almost entire time. Gorgeous ridge backpacking. Um, you're also not that far from the Smokies, um, and I did a week-long backpacking trip out there last year, uh, right kind of on the border of North Carolina and Tennessee. Um, in terms of the beach, I would say, if you just take I40 all the way east until it ends, then you're in Wilmington, or, uh, sorry, Wrightsville Beach. Um, and you can go there.

That's a great one, we have a lot of department retreats over there since it's so easy to get to. Um, if you kind of do some finagling, it takes more around four hours and go a little bit more north of that, um, you can get to Emerald Isle, which is also a gorgeous beach and is a lot of fun.

WENHAN: Yeah, uh, I think there are four national forest, uh, parks in, uh, North Carolina, so uh, I should say, NC is a really ideal place for hiking and uh, uh, lots of activities. And there, I think it took, it takes like four to five hours from here to Outer Banks.

LAUREN B: Mhm.

WENHAN: Yeah, it's a very nice place if you want to go to the, uh, to see the Atlantic. And uh, it also takes like two to three hours from here to Wilmington. It's a nice, um, place, I, I should say to, to taste the seafood, if you want.

LAUREN L: And there are a lot of unique things that you can only see in North Carolina. There's, um, an area near where, uh, Lauren was saying, near Emerald Isle but, um, still on the North Carolina coast, that has natural Venus flytraps, which is really cool. It's like, uh, a hiking park and you can see Venus flytraps in their natural habit, which is really neat. And if you go to Cape Hatteras, um, you can, the, you can actually see where the, uh, colder Atlantic water is meeting the warmer Atlantic water and they're like at, the difference in temperature makes the water a different color and you can see little eddies forming and it's really, really neat. There're some really beautiful things to see in North Carolina.

\*\*49:54\*\*

LAUREN B: And then I know the question said outside of Durham, but I just want to say that in terms of outdoor activities, if you're interested in beaches and stuff like that, we have a rock quarry in Durham, um which is basically a giant swimming hole. So you hike about a mile into the woods to get there and then it's just, this giant kind of lake, pond, thing. It just kind of filled up with water over the years (laughing). Um, and there's about a 20-foot cliff that you could also jump off of, if you're into that kind of thing (laughing).

WENHAN: Yeah uh, I think.

ANDRE: I, uh, I will add, even for hiking, you could actually, uh, do it locally. There's, um, just north of Durham called Eno State Park, which is, has great hiking trails by the Eno River and if you just go a little bit east towards Raleigh, uh, maybe only about 15 minutes, there's Umstead State Park, which has another, uh, really nice hiking trails that are just really close by to campus.

WENHAN: Yes, I think, uh, there is another place, uh, we can go boating like in the Jordan Lake. It's very near from the Duke University and you can, uh, get around like from four to three, uh, from four to six, uh, peoples if you want, friends and go boating on the lake. It's very, very interesting.



LAUREN L: Yeah, they have like Pontoon boats you can rent there, they have kayaks and canoes. Yeah, it's really nice.

WENHAN: Yeah, and okay, so next question, uh, is, so **what benefits can we get from International House?** Okay, uh, I think International House is a, is a family for, for uh, us like foreign students, I should say. If you need help, you can ask, uh, you can contact them and ask help, um, from them. And um, the detailed benefits, I should say, you can attend the International House orientation. So if you are sponsored by, uh, by Duke University, and you will get an email from the International House, you will, um, if you want, and just, uh, (52:00) just as orientation, you can get detailed informations, uh, from International House, I think.

LAUREN L: Alright, the next question. **What are the must-do things that first-year students might not be aware of?** I think the number one priority would be to do the campout (laughing).

WENHAN: (laughing)

ANDRE: (laughing)

LAUREN L: Because it's so unique to Duke to campout for basketball tickets and then go to the Duke basketball game. It's really a unique experience because Cameron Indoor Stadium is this very small, all wood stadium, very old-school looking and it's very small so you have to campout to get the tickets and it's really worth it, I think. Um, but even if you're not a huge basketball fan yet, you will become one by coming to Duke. Um, that's the really, the only thing I can think of. Do you guys have anything to add? Must-do?

WENHAN: Must-do

ANDRE: Yeah, if you can do campout, you should give it a try, at least your first year.

WENHAN: Yeah

LAUREN L: Yeah, that's like the best time to do it because after that, you'll probably feel too overwhelmed to do it again (laughing).

ANDRE: Next question. How is, **how are the grad students' social life/spare time like in Duke?** Yeah, actually, as I was mentioning before, there're so many activities and so much going on, on campus, that, uh, you just sort of have to pick out, um, the few things that, you know, you're interested in and, and you can do well because, um, yeah, as grad students the majority of your time is spent on your classes or your research, and uh, it, it takes up a lot of your time and a lot of your effort and focus. And so, it's good to have occasional things that, um, you can do to, um, meet new students, engage in some interests and, uh, unwind. But, um, I think you would never find a shortage of things to do or things going on or groups around campus, so it's just a matter of finding a good balance with your, um, your academic stuff that you're doing, um, here.

LAUREN B: Alright. **How many venues for art films are there in the Durham area off-campus?** Um, so this one I know that we have the, uh, film documentary festival, what's it called?

LAUREN L: I know what you're thinking of. I can't remember the name (laughing).

LAUREN B: (laughing) There's, there's a documentary festival every year in the American Tobacco District, um, and that's always really nice to go to. Um, other than that, I'm not entirely sure. That's not something that I've kind of picked up as a hobby.

ANDRE: (54:50) What about the Carolina Theater?

LAUREN L: Yeah, the Carolina Theater.

ANDRE: They show a lot of artsy films.

LAUREN L: Yeah, they show a lot of films. I mean, they have like double feature horror nights.

ANDRE: Yeah

LAUREN L: And they have, they do have like art films and they have, um, they do like for the Oscars, they'll do like the animated shorts viewing parties and things like that. Um.

ANDRE: It's located right in Downtown Durham, next to the Marriott Hotel.

\*\*55:15\*\*

LAUREN L: Yeah, and what's really, actually, Duke puts, it has a film department and they put on a lot of, um, film showings that like the students do or like the professors do or visiting professors do. So if you're really into, into seeing some studied (55:33) filmatography then that's a great option. And then, uh, if you want to see like big Blockbuster movies, uh, Duke has showings in the Bryan Center every week and sometimes they even do early releases, so you can see the films before they come out, which is really neat.

WENHAN: Okay. End of questions (laughing).

STACY: Alright. So uh, we have reached the end of our hour. I want to say thank you very much to our students and thank you so much to everyone who tuned in. Um, **there's one question I did want to answer that came in in advance. Um, it was a question about childcare facilities; if there are any near Duke.** The short answer is, yes there are. Um, and actually, after this chat is over, we will be, um, posting a link to, um, a resource that you can use to find a facility that is near you and that meets your needs. Uh, it's a very personal, uh, issue obviously and a lot of factors have to be weighed, so um, rather than to go into too many particulars about which facilities there are, um, I'll just post that link on the page and, um, you can go to that database and type in Durham and the zip code, um, actually for the Graduate School is 27708,

and you can search, uh, that way. So um, thank you all again. I'm actually going to go ahead and put the link to the recording up on the screen so everyone can see that and this is where you'll be able to go after, um, we end this broadcast. Um, we will try to answer as many of the questions that we, uh, didn't manage to get to. We got to a lot, but we didn't get to all of them. Uh, we will try to answer as many of the ones that we didn't get to as we can on that website, so be on the lookout for that. We'll also be emailing this link to the recording to our admitted students, so our admitted students will get it that way. So, thank you so much again and to our admitted students, we look forward to seeing you very soon. We're signing off now. Take care.