Practical Advice

Visa
The Visa is inexpensive. I don't know exactly how much as I'm still in process of obtaining it. It's relatively easy, once you figure out how to navigate the websites and make the two required appointments online.

Packing
I wish I had brought more towels and a spare electrical converter as well as more wool socks and an extra pair of sneakers. Do not bring two suitcases filled with clothes. You'll never end up wearing even half of them anyhow. Bring two suitcases that are each half full, not only will it make for a much more enjoyable time at the airport but you'll have enough room to bring all the souvenirs you buy home with you. If you drink coffee, consider yourself warned that what they serve here is expensive and subpar. Either bring your own percolator or buy one here and buy bags of ground coffee from Starbucks or another chain and brew your own. It's a fraction of the cost and much more delectable.

Arrival
I barely remember my experience with immigration upon arrival, it was a walk in the park. We were not assigned Buddies by FAUBA. The orientation was an abridged version of what I think an orientation should be. We had a quick walk around the university but I didn't feel orientated afterward. However, two months later, the follow-up asado (barbecue) we had with all the exchange students was a great time!

Academics

The University
The university is located in Agronomia, Capital Federal Buenos Aires. While computers and libraries were easily available, wifi was not.

The international office is super helpful and many of the people who work there are students so they are easy to talk to and relate with.

Classes
We enrolled the day of orientation. I took a mix of bachelor and master level classes. The bachelor level course met twice a week for two hours, while the master level course was an entire day (9am-6pm) Friday and Saturday.

Life Abroad

Living costs
Estimated monthly budget whilst on exchange
- Housing: USD 250/month
- Food: USD 8/day
- Transportation: I bought a bike but ended up reselling it because the drivers are crazy and on my route to the university there are no bike paths and after a few close calls I deemed biking too dangerous. Subte and collectives (buses) are really cheap effective modes of transportation however I typically walk to most all the places I need to go.
- Books: I did not have to buy any
Language
The first three months were a struggle. Castellano is much different from the traditional Spanish taught back home. By the end of each day I was physically drained from conversing and translating. Eventually everything just falls into place and you can suddenly comprehend the vast majority of what you hear and converse easily with anyone you encounter.

The crash course offered by FAUBA was useful, however the placement tests were shady and did not provide an accurate assessment of the appropriate level of the student. I would recommend taking a language course before departing.

Banking
I brought my debit card and used internet banking to transfer funds when needed. I would recommend making a budget before hand and bringing as much cash as you feel comfortable carrying as you can get a much better exchange rate that way.

Housing
I found housing through airbnb.com. I lived in a house with a middle-aged female artist. She also rented another room to a woman in her 20s from Ukraine. My rent was $250 USD, which included everything.

I was not on a meal plan, but my landlord often invited me to Tigre as well as her weekend house outside the city for various asados and Easter. I bought food at stores and cooked the majority of my meals.

Transportation
Subte costs about 50 cents a ride and Collectivo about 25 cents. You can buy a Subte pass at any kiosk, which makes transportation cheaper.

Health and Safety
I was initially hesitant about the location of my housing, as time went on I realized that any place can be safe as long as you use your head and trust your instincts.

The first month I was in Argentina I generally felt very ill and had constant migraines. I knew something strange was happening in my mouth. I confided in a professor, who was able to get me in touch with his personal dentist the next day. I had two infected impacted wisdom teeth. Ten days later I had them removed. It was by far the least expensive and most professional experience I have ever had with any dentist.

Overall exchange experience
The best thing about my semester abroad was: Becoming accustomed to a new culture and making lifelong contacts with selfless individuals. Also, playing soccer (fútbol) on the university team was a great way to meet people, exercise, and have fun.

The most challenging things about my semester abroad was: Stepping out of my comfort zone and trying things that I had never done. The first few months I got an extreme amount of unwanted attention merely for not looking like the locals. Eventually I got used to the vulgar and occasionally derogatory comments and they no longer phase me.

How did your semester abroad change your perspective? I wholly understand that the only thing to fear is fear itself.

Tips for future students: Take advantage of every opportunity to travel. Whether it be a free field trip offered through the university or long weekend where you have nothing going, go to some unfamiliar place. I can promise that the memories you’ll cherish most are not going to be of the planned pictures taken where everyone stands in a line and has a fake smile nor of those selfies with new friends. You will not capture your most cherished memories abroad on camera. Even if only for a weekend, I challenge you to lay all the technology aside and just embrace the tangible things in this life.