Hello everyone, my name is Emma Hallman. I am from Fort Worth, Texas. I am a junior at the Sam M. Walton College of Business studying Finance Banking with a minor in Economics.

I leave for Ireland this Sunday! We will be staying at University College Dublin for the majority of the program, attending lectures and visiting businesses such as KPMG and Guinness (where William Gosset introduced student t-testing!) as well as exploring the city, meeting the people and learning about Irish culture. We also will go to the west coast of Ireland for a few days.

The program will last three weeks, and we return on June 30. We are given a few free travel days at the end of the program. I plan to use these days to further explore the culture of Ireland, especially the literature and food.

I hope to have an amazing experience and to be able to share a glimpse of Ireland through my posts.
Today is our second day in Dublin. No more jet lag! Yesterday we went through campus orientation and then an Irish barbecue. Afterwards, half of us went into the city center and explored the area. The buses here are insane. There are a bunch of different routes, with one bus going each direction. Even the Dubliners we’ve met are confused.

Garbhon, our tour guide, explained so much about the history of Ireland especially in regards to the British impact. One of the coolest things we’ve seen is the doors. A lot of the doors are painted bright colors. The reason for it is unknown, but so far we’ve heard three different stories. One story is that a guy’s neighbor kept walking into the wrong house so the neighbor got angry and painted his door. Another story says it’s so that when you’re drunk, you can find your door since all the row houses look exactly the same. Another story is that when Queen Victoria passed away the British told everyone to paint their doors black to commemorate the death. The Irish instead decided to paint their doors every other bright color.

The most different thing that I’ve seen is all of the political posters. The Socialist Party is a lot more prevalent here than in the United States.

Dublin is amazing. The people are super friendly. I can't wait for my next adventure!
The history of Ireland is remarkable. Dublin plays a key role in quite a bit of Ireland’s modern history. Today we visited the Hill of Tara, which was the ancient capital of Ireland. It is also the location where legend says Saint Patrick Christianized the Druids after an epic battle of miracles.

Afterwards, we went to see Trim Castle, an Anglo-Norman keep from the 12th century. The keep was one of the first on the island built totally for defending against invaders.

Earlier we toured Kilmainham Gaol, a former prison in Dublin. It was a very profound place. Executions there and the stories around them changed Irish public opinion about independence from Britain.

Beyond the history, Dublin is a city of great literary history. It has been home to Samuel Beckett, James Joyce, Oscar Wilde and many others. Sunday is quite exciting. June 16 is Bloomsday, a celebration of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which has Dublin as its location.

Yesterday we experienced Irish culture through Gaelic games such as Gaelic football and hurling. We all learned how to play and then visited Croke Stadium, which is the national Gaelic stadium. The fascinating thing about the Gaelic Athletic Association and its sports is that it is completely non-profit and voluntary. Every player has a job where they earn their living then, at nights and weekends, they train and play. There is a huge national identity with the Gaelic games that even extends into the business world. Ulster Bank has 10 employees that compete in the games.

After experiencing and learning about Irish history and culture, it will be interesting to begin lectures about business and to see how everything is intertwined.
Ireland: Food, Sport, Bloomsday and Business

By Emma Hallman

The past several days have been packed with exciting things. Saturday we went to Meeting House Square where there is a local market. The food was delicious. Everything in Ireland is fresh, not genetically modified and very tightly regulated. The food here is very similar to what I'm used to, but there is a huge difference between the processed food versus the organic food here.

We then went to see the hurling rematch between Dublin and Wexford. There was a huge contrast between watching that match in Ireland compared to watching a game in the States. The spectators all mixed together. The kids brought their own equipment and played on the sidelines until after the game – when tradition says you run onto the field and start playing a game of hurling.

Sunday was Bloomsday, which celebrates James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. We went to an experimental one-man play where the whole point was to understand that it's OK to not understand. I thought the play was fantastic and a nice comparison to the play we saw on Tuesday called The Love Hungry Farmer, which was also a one-man play. The theatre is a very important source of entertainment in Dublin because of the famous plays that have come out of this city.

We've attended class all week on the various aspects of business in Ireland and the European Union. It was interesting to see how similar Ireland is to the United States but also how the EU adds a whole new complexity to international business. We discussed the Celtic Tiger, which was the era in the 90's of economic success caused by good policy change. The era was ended by the financial crisis and hit Ireland's banking system much harder than the U.S. system.

Business in Ireland has been very interesting to study because of the cultural similarities but also because Ireland is an island nation geographically separated from the majority of the EU. Ireland has had to adopt policies to encourage foreign direct investment and because of this Ireland has been one of the few EU countries with a growing economy since the recession.

We leave for Galway on Friday! I am excited to see the Irish countryside and the west coast.
Ireland: Its Breathtaking West Coast

June 24

By Emma Hallman

The west coast of Ireland is breathtaking. There are countless Neolithic burial sites, castles and cliffs. The cliffs of Moher are the most famous – the 6th Harry Potter movie had the cliffs as the location of one of Voldemort’s horcrux. The cliffs are just as forbidding in real life as they were in the movie. Some of us stood at the top of the cliff and watched a huge storm come in.

The countryside is so pretty. The landscaping in front of houses is always colorful. The land is covered with limestone that has been gouged by glaciers from the last ice age. This makes growing potatoes very difficult, but there are dozens of species of flowers – including 24 species of orchids – that grow everywhere.
Yesterday morning, we took a ferry from Galway to Inis Mor, the largest of the Aran Islands in Galway Bay. A couple of us took a horse drawn buggy around the island to Dun Aonghasa, which is a Viking fortress. We walked about half a mile up hills covered with the gouged limestone. The fort was built in the shape of a semicircle with tall stone walls. The back edge is a straight drop into jagged rocks and the freezing ocean.

Standing as close to the edge as I dared, which was about 20 feet, all I could see were huge waves crashing on the far cliffs. It felt as if I was standing on the edge of the world.

The island is beautiful. Everywhere you go you see green fields sectioned off with gray rock and the ocean in the background. There were horses and cows everywhere and most of the houses were white and plain. Yesterday was the annual bonfire night where each village lights a bonfire to celebrate the first full moon after the summer solstice. It was amazing to sit at the bonfire and listen to someone singing in Irish, while watching the full moon. From where we were, we could see at least a dozen other fires on the island and the neighboring island.
The trip west has been wonderful. We were able to experience a much more traditional Irish culture than in Dublin. We learned a lot about Neolithic Ireland and the Vikings. Tomorrow begins independent travel time. I plan to go to the south, then the north as well as to see a few more things in Dublin.

(Thanks to Hayden Legler, who took most of the photos).
Ireland: Independent Travel and Home

July 2

By Emma Hallman

For our independent travel, 11 of us set out on the train for Killarney on the south coast of Ireland. We toured of the Ring of Kerry, which is six hours of driving around the south coast. The landscape was fantastic.
There were three lakes surrounded by mountains. At one point we stopped to see a shepherd use border collies to herd sheep. Each dog has its own set of signals, so the shepherd could send specific instructions to each dog to herd the sheep.

Afterwards, three of us took the train to Cork where we went to see Blarney Castle. The grounds are amazing. There were waterfalls and caves. The castle towered above everything. We went into the dungeons, which were caves.

We then took a taxi to Cobh, which was the last port of call for the Titanic and is also close to the spot the Lusitania was sunk during World War I. The town was very quaint and empty. The coolest thing in Cobh was the giant cathedral at the top of the hill.

We then took the train back to Dublin, exhausted after backpacking for a couple of days. I spent the next day in Dublin at the National Gallery where I saw works by Rembrandt and Van Gogh. There were also paintings of Dublin, which I found fascinating because I could actually recognize the buildings in the paintings even though they were painted more than a hundred years ago. I spent the last couple of days shopping and wandering the streets of Dublin.
I am now back in the United States, but my experience isn’t over. After spending three weeks immersed in Irish business, culture and history, it has been interesting to return to the states and see stark differences as well as similarities.

The study abroad program has been a truly rewarding experience, and I can’t wait to travel again.