

## FIELD REPORT: MARSHALL PLAN MEETS CAL POLY

### **General impression of your research stay abroad**

My general impression was great! I would highly recommend doing a semester abroad. I had the best time and found a ton of great friendships while studying at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California.

To get to know some of the locals, I decided to do ‚couchsurfing‘ for the first week and a half. I met a few very nice and open minded students who showed me around and helped me find my way. Through these friends I also got involved in other activities, like volunteering at the Wildflower triathlon: I was part of the committee and together with approx. 50 other Cal Poly students we organized the whole event which is one of the largest triathlon events in the world, with 7,500 athletes and 30,000 spectators.

At Cal Poly the international center also offered some kind of buddy program and hosted a lot of events, to get to know each other. I became really good friends with the international center hosts and with a lot of other international students from all over the world as well.

### **Quality of the host institution**

The hosts were super nice, did not hesitate to help and cared about me a lot. For my research I was able to use Cal Poly’s library and also had a couple of meetings with employees of the library, just to explain to me, where to find everything and how to use the online library website and helped me to easily start working on my thesis.

### **Contacts within the host institution, inclusion in the organization**

On my first day, our Dean invited me to join an Architecture class, to introduce myself and to get to know some of the professors and other students.

It was great, because I was able to spontaneously join the class for a quarter as a visitor and work together with students from not only the Architecture program but also from the fields of General and Structural Engineering. Together in teams of four and five students we worked on a design for a new building for the San Francisco State University. We also made two field trips up to San Francisco and met with our clients and some people from SFSU.

Another time the Architecture Department’s Dean invited all international Architecture students to have dinner at her place. Again, I met a lot of great young people there and felt very much included.

### **Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows**

If you plan on going to the United States, I recommend on taking your time to plan every detail carefully. Also applying for the MPS takes quite a while. But totally worth the work and all in all I can say that everyone worked together to make that stay possible. In San Luis Obispo I chose to do off-campus housing and stayed at a student’s residence close to both, Cal Poly and the city centre. Housing in San Luis Obispo is quite expensive but also a nice way to get to know other students. To get to know others there are also a lot of activities at Cal Poly you can join, sport programs, or other groups, you might find a lot of them on facebook as well. Just don’t be shy, the locals are very interested in international students and I felt very welcomed all the time.

My recommendation for people studying abroad is to enjoy every day, explore the country and the culture, travel, go on a lot of hikes and to stay as long as you can. Studying abroad gave me a new outlook on life and other cultures around me and changed my way of thinking to the better. I hope everyone gets the opportunity to experience a unique education abroad experience, too.

### **Contact E-mail after completion of research stay**

For any further questions you are very welcome to contact me via mail to [iris.gomm@gmx.at](mailto:iris.gomm@gmx.at).