

Field Report Sabine Herzele 742 926 21 17 2016

For my PhD I am dealing, among others, with surface characterization of lignocellulosic materials. For this reason, the University of Maine was of great interest for me, since it is a pioneering institution in the field of surface characterization of lignocellulosic material in the USA.

The state of Maine is located in the very north of the USA on the east coast and is part of the New England area.

When I landed in Boston I got picked up by a friend at the airport. We spend some days in Boston before we went by bus to the University of Maine. Concord coach offers a direct connection between Boston and the UMaine Campus in Orono. Orono is a small college town, whose citizens mainly consist of more than 11.000 students and faculty staff.

When the bus arrived at the campus I was surprised because the first thing I saw, was the huge football stadium of the university. After I moved into my new place, I started to explore the town of Orono.

On my first trip I explored the two main streets of the town, a hand full of pubs, the Stillwater river, the public library and a bicycle shop. When I came home that day, I asked my landlord about the nearest grocery store. Since she said that I at least would need a bike to get there, I decided to go back to the shop the next day to buy one.

The typical US- campus is structured like a little town to make life as convenient as possible for the students. Beside all the academic buildings and the dining hall, the campus consists of dorms, a football stadium, an ice hockey field, an indoor pool, a recreation center with a sauna and hot tub, a planetarium, a big convention center, a museum and an outdoor experience center. All these buildings are surrounded by parking lots since almost everybody who lives off campus goes to university by car. All these facilities impressed me a lot. Unfortunately, I had to learn later that during the summer holiday only the recreation center and the planetarium (for weekend shows) were open.

My working day started every day with a little bike ride to the laboratory. Prof. Gardner, who was my host, is a professor for wood science at the University of Maine. He is one of the key international experts in surface chemistry and adhesion

issues of wood and cellulosic substrates. Inverse gas chromatography is one of the central techniques used in his laboratory.

His small group of staff was very welcoming and supported me very much during my stay. Prof. Gardner always took time to review and discuss my latest results.

I was given a very detailed tour and introduction to the labs by Prof. Gardner's PhD candidate. Furthermore a very extensive security briefing is mandatory for all personnel.

The international student office was also a great help to me, offering much information regarding campus life, housing and contact to other students and PhD candidates.

Thanks to my stay in the USA my scientific English skills improved drastically. I appreciate the fact, that I got some insights in the daily laboratory work at an US institution.

Based on the collected data at the University of Maine, in combination with data collected at BOKU, my colleagues and I plan to publish a paper in a scientific journal in the next months.

Beside the work in the laboratory I went on some weekend trips. I visited the very beautiful Acadia National Park, the Film Festival in Camden and Boston. For my birthday I went to New York City to the World Science Festival., which has long been a dream of mine.

I learned a lot during my stay at UMaine about the culture, the people, the country and of course the lab work. I would strongly recommend buying or renting a car, though. Distances between locations are rather long and public transportation is not comparable to what we are used to in Europe. From the scientific perspective, I would say it is important to get in contact with the host institution early and discuss your research plan as detailed as possible before your arrival to ensure an efficient collaboration.