

# **Personal report for MPS-stay 02/2017 - 08/2017 in Bowling Green, OH, USA**

*Christian Promper, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017*

To conclude my master study at the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences with the degree course “Information technology & Systems management” I decided to apply for the Marshall Plan Scholarship program. Right from the start, the cooperation with my supervisor FH-Prof. DI Mag. Dr. Dominik Engel from my home university worked perfectly. He supported me at any time. Luckily, the Marshall Plan Foundation decided to accept my application. With this acceptance, the application for the visa and the further preparation for the research project began. An initial video conference with my hosting professor Robert C. Green II, Ph.D. from the Bowling Green State University and my supervisor from my home university established a first connection. With the help of my hosting professor and the very kind staff from the immigration services respectively international office I was able to provide all documents for the visa application.

After the completion of the visa process, the situation got serious. Flights had to be booked and an accommodation was necessary, too. Due to the reason that the research stay does not include any study programs, it was not possible to get an apartment at the campus directly. So, I decided to make an online research and to rent an apartment beforehand. In my case, this worked perfectly. I found a nice apartment with even nicer landlords. I would totally recommend “Sycamore Square Apartments & Houses” in Bowling Green, OH. Regarding my arrival at the airport, my hosting professor offered to pick me up at the airport.

Once arrived in the United States, I received a very warm welcome from my hosting professor. He visited me personally at my apartment and offered to help me with my moving in or any other concerns. Since I arrived a few days before the research period started, I had a few days to settle in. Bowling Green itself is a small town, which is geared toward students. So, one can find a lot of coffee shops, dining possibilities and nightclubs.

However, on my first day at the university, I got a key to an office with my personal workspace and my hosting professor introduced me to all colleagues at the department. Also, a personal ID at the university was created for me. So, I had access to all relevant facilities at the university.

Regarding the research workflow, my hosting professor and I agreed to meetings on a regular basis. Additionally, the door to Prof. Robert Green's office was always open whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research. Furthermore, my supervisor professor Engel, my hosting professor and I agreed to video conference meetings on a regular basis, too. Within these conferences, we discussed regularly the progress and further steps. So, the research project grew little by little.

The integration at the university was not very easy. Since the semester abroad respectively the J1 visa does not allow the participation at any courses and the research project was handled more or less alone, I had no direct colleagues or fellow students. However, through the classification as Bowling Green State University staff, it was possible to participate in different activities. For example, the university's fitness club offered a lot of activities, such as climbing, caving or hiking. The fitness club offered also a lot of sport programs and fitness courses in which I participated. Additionally, there are different student organizations with a lot of different directions (e.g., computer club). Besides that, my hosting professor also invited me to a lot of different events to become integrated. Nonetheless, it is difficult to establish contacts with American students.

All in all, I had a great time abroad. My expectations for this research project were not only fulfilled but even exceeded. I got the possibility to become familiar with the American culture and university system respectively to compare the university system of the United States and the university system of Austria, and also to establish social contacts. All the gained experience is priceless and I would repeat the research project abroad immediately.

## **Recommendations for future MPS scholars/fellows**

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First of all, I would recommend starting early with the search for the research supervisor. It is very important to find a suitable research project and to discuss details regarding the project as well as regarding the abroad university. For this, the supervisor is the first and best contact person. Regarding the application process, I would recommend requesting a confirmation about the English profession from the home university. Otherwise it could be possible that the abroad university demands an English certificate (e.g., TOEFL). Furthermore, beside the fact that one must make a health insurance contract, I would recommend entering into a health insurance contract in the home county before the research stay. For all financial transactions, it was sufficient for me to have only a credit card. So, I was in no need of a local bank account since one can pay nearly everything with a credit card within the United States. Looking back, personally I would look for either a shared apartment or a single room within a student residence. With such an accommodation, it should be easier to establish contacts.

During my research stay, I had to complete several courses at my home university. So, I would recommend planning enough time to complete compensation works or to participate in courses via video conference, as it was possible in my case.

## **Contact information after the research period**

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