

Field Report Lukas Schaffhauser

General Impression:

Travelling to the United States of America was one of my biggest goals for the near future. I was so happy when I got accepted for the Marshall Plan Scholarship so that I can finally experience life in the US. When I first arrived in Albuquerque (after travelling for 24 hours) I was overwhelmed. I have never seen such a landscape before and since my first night was in a hotel on the 13th floor, I have really enjoyed the view before falling asleep. The rest of the time I stayed at University Village in ABQ and met a whole bunch of interesting people. The people living there had a wide range going from young couples that have just moved in their first flat to older people enjoying their retirement. It was like a big family and they have welcomed me very kindly. After my first week of arriving in ABQ and self-quarantining myself (because it was recommended by the government), I finally had the possibility to visit the University of New Mexico. And what a feeling that was. I always thought that when watching TV series that it could never be like that but the whole campus of UNM was so big and beautiful as I could have never imagined. Especially the diversity between new buildings (I spent most of my time working in the newest one) and pretty traditional, old buildings which are standing there for almost hundred years.

Sadly, I was not able to enjoy the campus in its complete beauty since, because of the challenging situation with Covid, only a few people were allowed to visit the campus. Nevertheless, I was going there on a daily basis to either work on my master thesis or to relax and enjoy in the area (mostly at the duck pond on campus). For my evenings I spent most of the time talking to the people living at University Village. This was very important for me since it helped me understand the situation in the US and to learn what the people in the US care about. There was also a guy especially interested in the European history so I think we have spent so many hours just talking about history and every day we met he asked me different new words in German he just learned. Additionally, two of the people living there took me on a trip where we visited some places in New Mexico like the beautiful city of Santa Fe, the natural areas to the north of Albuquerque as well as some other places. I will definitely never forget the time I spent there and was really sad that my two months visit of BQ flew by so fast. Nevertheless, I will definitely visit this area again in a few years since I am still in contact with the people and also love the city and the culture.

My host university UNM:

As I have already mentioned the campus of the University of New Mexico is exceeding everything I have imagined. Despite being pretty empty at the time of my stay, I still got to talk to some people

working there and got some expressions on life in the US. I was included into the organization at UNM already before my arrival. They have really put effort into getting me to the university and were all really friendly and supportive. As soon as I arrived in ABQ I was already contacted to settle everything I need for the university like my ID card, my online access and access to the specific building of the university. Here I have to especially thank my supervisor Christopher Lippitt, PhD as well as the admin of the ASPIRE lab Rowan Converse. The two of them helped me with everything needed while I was at UNM and were my go to people when I needed advice during my time there. I think there was nothing missing during my stay at UNM: I got my own machine set up in the lab for me, I got online access to the whole data I needed as well as to all facilities and, in my opinion the biggest benefit, I was also able to access and use the machine in the lab during the complete summer despite already being back in Austria. Without the good work and the friendly help of UNM I would definitely have had more troubles finishing my master thesis.

Recommendations for future MP students:

Before I travelled to the US I was in contact with some of my colleagues at CUAS who have already been to the US. I would definitely recommend to do that since you get a good feeling what you need to live in the United States as well as what you can expect. Furthermore, I would definitely recommend to check if you have all the documents needed for entering the US and have saved them on your phone, your laptop and printed out. What I would also recommend is to not have any preconceptions on anything that will or might happen during your stay or on the people you are going to meet. I know it is kind of awkward in the time of the pandemic but go and talk to people. Meeting new people from different generations and listening to their stories was one of the most interesting things I have experienced in my life. I would also recommend to travel to different places in the area of your stay and to not plan everything beforehand. Speaking to locals does help you to visit places you might not find in a tourist guide. What I would also recommend is to enjoy the culture and to be really open to new things. Especially, when it comes to food, there are a lot of varieties and traditions in certain areas of the US. To sum it up I would say that there is no recipe to have the perfect time but be open for new experiences, new people and the different culture.

At last I wanted to thank the Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation for giving me the possibility and the resources to visit the United States of America as well as everybody at CUAS and at UNM involved in this process who have helped me a lot to make my time in the US a time I will never forget and happily look back for my whole life.

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