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Travel Report



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From 7th March to 7th June 2017 I had the opportunity to visit the Lab from Prof. Dr. Wayne Parrott at the Crop Genetic Transformation Laboratory at the Center for Applied Genetic Technologies on the University of Georgia (UGA), USA. The lab is specialized in plant genetic engineering with a focus on oil crops. The aim of my research travel was to construct gene knock out constructs based on the CRISPR/Cas9 technology.

The Crop Genetic Transformation Laboratory is located in Athens approximately 120 km from the capital Atlanta. I went by the local GROOME Transportation Service (<http://www.groometransportation.com>) from the airport directly to my apartment in Athens. The UGA provided a University guest house at the Health Science Campus with a comfortable three bedroom shared unit and a private bathroom.

The public transportation system is not very well, especially during summer break. It is recommendable to rent a bicycle from the UGA or to have an international driving permit. The first days I got a lot of introductions and issued a UGA card. With this card it was possible to use the UGA bus system (<https://transit.uga.edu/>) as well as the Athens Transit System (<https://www.athensclarkecounty.com/199/Transit>) for free. The UGA developed a very helpful mobile app (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=edu.uga.eits.portal.mobiledev>) with bus trackers, campus map and UGA mail service. I used a prepaid card from AT&T for my cell phone which is available with different monthly plans (<https://www.att.com/prepaid/plans.html>). The bus systems are partly active until 9 PM, but

people often use UBER (<https://www.uber.com>) as comfortable and cheaper alternative to taxis.

The UGA is very well prepared for visiting scholars. All organizational issues like accommodation check in, immigration service forms, UGA card, lab safety training etc. could be finished very fast.

In the Parrott lab I got an own office and laboratory space and could immediately start with my project. Prof. Parrott and his colleagues were very helpful and supported me continuously during my stay. The lab is very well equipped with the latest technologies for plant genetic engineering. Beside the CRISPR/Cas system I could learn many other tools and techniques during the weekly lab meetings with presentations and discussions. I could finish my research work in time and had also the opportunity to explore Georgia during the weekends. We visited several conferences and symposiums like the UGA Plant Center Symposium, the Integrative Research and Ideas Symposium and the Annual Retreat of the Institute of Plant Breeding, Genetics & Genomics. Furthermore I could use the educational program of the UGA and visited seminars and classes in different academic disciplines.

I can highly recommend to visit the University of Georgia and make use of the wide range of their academic and professional education.

Finally I want to thank the Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation for the financial support of my research work in the USA. The Marshall Plan-Scholarship allowed me to work on current, complex research questions and to gain work experience in the field of plant improvement at an international level.