

# Field Report

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It was hard work getting to Philadelphia. Countless hours spent on finding a host institution, applying for the Marshall Plan scholarship and sorting out all visa issues. In the end all of the hard work that I have put in paid off. I had an absolutely amazing time in the USA. Through the generosity of Prof. Norman I. Badler I was invited to stay for three months at the SIG Lab for Computer Graphics at the prestigious University of Pennsylvania. I was assigned the status of a short term scholar and guest of the department, and from the very beginning everything was done to make my stay as smooth as possible. I was assigned a computer space in the lab and Prof. Badler made sure that I had everything I needed. I was introduced to other students that were conducting research in the lab and I would form a lasting bond with many of them over the course of the next months. I can honestly say that I have learned more than ever during that time, and there is no way that my thesis could have been as good as it is without my stay in the US.

It was my first time in the country of opportunity, and Philadelphia was a very welcoming city. I rented a room at the edge of the campus in a house shared by other students. The other students were mostly Wharton majors, and therefore I had very little professional interaction with them. They were very nice and helpful people, though, and I am very happy that I have chosen that option instead of living in the international students' house. The campus itself was very green and spacious, and I was able to adjust my life rather easily. It were mostly the small differences to Austria that required adjustment. I was really surprised about the wide variety of good food options available on campus. The stereotype of American fast food proved to be entirely untrue (at least at Penn). There were many food trucks on the streets which served everything from artisan pizza to Korean-Mexican fusion kitchen. I was included into the general university system and received a PennID, which allowed me to use other university facilities such as the training center and the campus-wide Wi-Fi. As my room was just on the edge of campus I was able to walk to the lab every day by foot. It was a very enjoyable route which lead through shady forested walkways and past old gothic buildings. It allowed me to experience a part of the US college life even though I was not technically a student.

The SIG lab was mostly used by seniors and master students, and I felt right at home with these young bright minds. On many occasions I have been able to ponder over ideas with them or just participate in a free exchange of information. Prof. Badler left me

free reign during my time, and I could focus on my research without needing to produce reports or participate in other activities. I believe that this was crucial to my eventual success. Distance field real-time rendering is an emerging new research field with most projects happening in the videogame industry. Very little has happened in academia on that front, which is why I was so grateful to Prof. Badler for supporting my project and letting me work unobstructed. This in turn led to the fact that I had to rely on myself and the help of other students in order to work out some of the more complex problems that I encountered. I truly enjoyed conducting this type of pioneering work and this experience.

During my time at Penn I was encouraged to attend any courses that I want. I was truly excited and eager to experience the US college system. I participated in 2 different courses every week, which gave me less time for my research but allowed me to learn a lot of things that were not taught at my home university. This helped me to get to know the other students better and to further deepen my knowledge in the exciting field of computer graphics. I was so excited about one of the lectures, an experimental course on procedural graphics that I decided to try to bring it back with me to my home university. The lecturer of the course was very supportive of the idea and provided me with all her lecture notes and materials. I have been in contact with the director of program at my home university, and hopefully I will be allowed to offer that course to other students in Vienna. A true US-Austrian cooperation.

Overall I can highly recommend the University of Pennsylvania and their school of engineering. My stay there has broadened my horizon and deepened my knowledge significantly. This would not have been possible without the generous support of the Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation. Every student should try and apply for such an opportunity. It is a lot of work, but in the end, all of that hard work will pay off.