

Field Report

In late August, my Austrian colleagues and I started our semester abroad at the University of Portland. Our first contact was Dr. Kennedy, who picked us up from the airport and showed us around the campus on the first day of our stay. When he showed us the dorms, the RAs gave us a warm welcome and helped us to get all the things we needed. We arrived a week before the regular start of the semester, but the preparations for the freshmen's arrival were already in full swing.

Even though it was a pretty warm summer in Portland, the lawns on campus were green and well maintained. There were both new and old buildings, but they all were aesthetically pleasing. The most impressive building was the library which seemed very welcoming and modern. On our first day of class, we were surprised how small the classes were. This turned out to be a good thing because it was easier to pay attention and ask questions during the lectures. To keep the quality of the lectures high, the teachers always tried to create scenarios which were related to the real world to get a better understanding of the topic. To obtain a decent grade, it was required to do a lot of homework and projects. Therefore, it was a good thing that the library was such a welcoming place because we had to spend a lot of time there during the semester. When struggles occurred, most of the teachers were happy to help and always available for questions, even outside of the classroom.

The only thing that was counterproductive was the safety policy for the green roof where the solar collectors for our project were placed. To get access to the roof it was necessary to make appointments one week in advance and these appointments were limited to a maximum of one hour. This was a big disadvantage because there would have been a lot more practical work to be done on the solar system than it was actually possible to do with this policy.

Due to the small classes and some group projects, the contact with other students and faculty personal was given. It was getting more and more over the semester especially because we weren't treated like foreign students. This had the advantage that we were included in everything like regular American students. The disadvantage to this was that we were thrown into the cold water sometimes and needed time to adjust to the differences of the system.

For future students who participate in the Marshall Plan Program, I recommend talking to people from your partner faculty as much as possible. This helps to improve the English skills enormously and helps to gain new contacts who can help with the requirements of the University. According to the project, it is important to keep the faculty advisors updated on your progress and to not be shy to ask them for help. For the final report it is essential to begin early enough so you do not have to stress the last few weeks.