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## Field Report

With the help of the Marshall Plan Scholarship I was able to conduct my research at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). My advisor, Prof. Junghoo Cho of the Computer Science Department is one of the peers in the information retrieval research field (e.g., on topics like natural language processing or recommender systems) with a rich track of professional activities and publications in the research community. Beyond his credentials, the most valuable aspect of working under his supervision is the opportunity to be put into such a nurturing environment which not only fosters the collaboration between the students but also the participation at lectures and invited talks about the most recent research findings of other peers in the field.

During my stay I was located at the Scalable Analytics Institute (ScAi) Lab which has more than 20 PhD students and research scientists. The group was very welcoming and had weekly meetings to foster knowledge exchange between them and all the other students from the Computer Science Department. Overall, my experience was very positive. Beyond the fruitful collaboration on the work presented in the research paper, I was involved in other projects within the group that are related to my research and which opened the path towards new ideas and completely new research opportunities.

It needs to be said that there is quite an administrative overhead when one first arrives at UCLA. However, the supporting staff as well as fellow students were more than ready to help with any issues that had to be solved. If I could recommend one thing, it would be to not be shy and contact the Dashew Center for International Students beforehand about all the bureaucratic hurdles which await you. They will gladly be of help to anyone about anything!

For future Marshall Plan students coming to UCLA, I would definitely advise to appreciate the unique environment they will work on their research. The UCLA campus is filled with constant opportunities to network and attend various scientific and non-scientific events. Besides focusing purely on the work and the anticipated scientific outcome, it is also important to have a good work-life balance. As a health-oriented university, UCLA constantly motivates its students and offers a wide variety of individual and group sport options on and off the campus. Moreover, this is further enriched with diverse food options which definitely contribute to a much healthier lifestyle.

Although you could practically live on the campus, I would also advise to seize UCLA's unique location and visit the surrounding areas. Be it a walk on the sunny beach of Santa Monica, enjoying the art gallery at the Getty villa or catching a stand-up comedy in Hollywood – in Los Angeles everyone can find something for themselves. One tip however, although you can travel with the bus everywhere, it is not usually the best and most reliable option. Los Angeles is quite large and the traffic there is really something else. Depending on where you go, taking an Uber or Lyft will be the better option in most cases.

Finally, one of the worst things about the location of the campus is finding a good housing opportunity. The whole area is exceptionally expensive and you will have a hard time in finding something within the budget. This comes of course in addition to being accepted as a new tenant in the first place as the competition is quite extensive. I would advise not to panic and rather book a place for a few weeks on Airbnb until something suitable comes up or else you will easily need to pay much more than you can actually afford.

### Important links:

Dashew Center: <http://www.internationalcenter.ucla.edu/>

John Wooden Center: <http://www.recreation.ucla.edu/>

Bruinwalk: <http://www.bruinwalk.com/>