

General Impression of the Research Abroad

It was a fantastic experience, and I would suggest everyone seize the opportunity to do research abroad. It is priceless to get to know another culture and meet people who share the same principles. I would say that a semester or research abroad helps to develop yourself in many ways and provides you with great experience for the future life. Even though there were times in which I did not enjoy doing research abroad and was not able to see my family whenever I wanted to, I stayed on the course and was grateful that I got the opportunity for a semester abroad at the Drexel University.

Quality of the Host Institution

The Drexel University is a prominent University with a lot of different studies. As of the Digital Media department, it was great to see that they are very focused on being state of the art for both students and teachers. They encourage all students to use state of the art technology like virtual reality or motion capturing in classes but also in their free time. Students can establish their own clubs for all kinds of technology and can use all the devices in the Drexel University's Digital Media department as long as they wish regarding their availability. In conclusion, the teachers of the Drexel University offer a lot of flexibility in a student's development and provide help for any kind of a student's idea he or she wants to accomplish.

Contacts within the Host Institution and Inclusion in the Organization

My initial contact at the Drexel University was the head of the department of Digital Media, Dr. Michael Wagner who himself is Austrian which made things even more comfortable to communicate. He showed me around and helped with whatever was necessary to make my stay at Drexel as comfortable as possible.

As head of the department, he introduced me to my supervisors and fellow students. I was then taken care of by Dr. Santiago Ontanon who was my supervisor for the whole period of research. Michael and Santiago offered me to work onsite with Santiago, in the room for master students of Digital Media, or any other place which I would prefer. This inclusion provided a very flexible stay at the Drexel University, and I decided to take advantage of working in the master students' room to get to know more like-minded people. I could always meet with Santiago on short notice or get in contact via email so that it was easy to get help or advice with whatever issue I had. Besides the inclusion, I could use any device I would have needed for my research.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan Students and Fellows

Housing

First, an important thing to do before flying to the US is to find an appropriate apartment for the stay in the US.

Different University's offer different help in finding suitable housing. As of the Drexel University, the only help someone will ever get is a site on their homepage with information on how to get along in Philadelphia. There are also some application websites for their own housing communities which does not allow to apply for less than a year. The Drexel University has a strict housing policy for their student which says that students need to live in student dorms in the first year, can move into shared student housing in the second year and finally can move into own houses after that. The dorms, shared apartments and most of the homes are the property of the Drexel University, and the easiest way to find its way into one of these apartments is a Facebook group for housing in Philadelphia, specifically for Drexel students. This is most likely the easiest way to find an apartment for a short period of time

since a lot of Drexel students are doing semesters abroad and need to find people who want to take over their room in an apartment.

However, one can also look for an apartment in the center of the city or an apartment near a metro station because the Drexel University is easily reachable by metro. Nevertheless, an advantage of living on the “campus” of the Drexel University is that they have an own Police which is patrolling around the campus so that everyone stays safe in case of an emergency.

Living Costs

The Drexel University required me to possess 2000\$ per month for my stay in Philadelphia before I got approved. First, I thought that this amount of money is an extraordinarily high amount for staying in the US as a student. Even though I couldn't believe it, it turned out that this specification and requirement almost fulfilled the living expenses in Philadelphia. Since Philadelphia is a big city and prices in the US are higher than in Austria, it costs nearly 20% more than in Vienna in general whereas rent prices are even 40% higher than in Vienna. I recently got notice of a website from recruiters which states a cost of living comparison for almost every city in the world. I recommend this website to every student ever who wants to do a semester abroad and wants to know how much money they will need. This website is called www.numbeo.com.