

Field Report of the Research Period at Colorado School of Mines funded by the Marshall Plan Scholarship

Introduction and General Impressions

I am a Metallurgy student at the University of Leoben, and currently in the final year of my master's degree. As part of my final thesis, I was able to perform some of my research in the United States of America. To finance this research mobility, I received the Marshall Plan Scholarship, for which I am very thankful.

The research performed in the USA consisted of the literature research as well as the analysis of industry data. Apart from the work performed abroad and all the professional knowledge gained in the process also my linguistic skills improved a lot during this time. Furthermore, because of the international ambitions of the Colorado School of Mines I was able to get to know interesting people, not only from the country hosting me, but from around the globe. The networks and most importantly friendships formed are what made this time special to me. Despite the small cultural and growing political differences between Europe and the United States, these relationships formed abroad made it obvious how many values we all share.

The Host Institution

My host University, the Colorado School of Mines, is situated in Golden, Colorado located between Colorado's capital Denver and the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. The University campus makes up large parts of this small western American town. The region offers some of the most beautiful American landscapes. A short hike up the north Table Mountain, offers a great view of Golden and the University which I enjoyed as often as possible.

When thinking of the best Universities in Colorado usually the University of Boulder, located only 30 minutes north of Golden, comes to mind. However, in the field of Metallurgy the Colorado School of Mines has one of, if not the best reputation in the USA. Only about six thousand students study there which leads to an exceptionally great student/faculty ratio of 17:1. This was a huge advantage when seeking assistance from any professor or administrative employees. Furthermore, despite its size the University is equipped with many state of the art research laboratories.

Nearly everyone I got in contact with at the University proved to be exceptionally friendly and helpful, and I especially want to thank two people. Firstly, my supervising Professor at the

Colorado School of Mines, Emmanuel De Moor. He really went above and beyond not only regarding my thesis, but also in making me feel welcome and helping me with any administrative problems. Secondly, the Associate Director of the International Office, Mary Cook. She was more than helpful with administrative, visa or housing related issues and always had an open ear and heart for all international students.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan Students

The first, very general, recommendation I want to give to any Austrian student intrigued with the idea of researching abroad in general, is to take matters into their own hand. Find a research topic at your home University and ask your professors for possible contacts at other universities. If no contacts exist, as in was in my case, choose the universities you would like to study at and contact the professors there directly. I hope you are as lucky as I was to have a professor, as helpful as mine was, responding to you.

Secondly, it is important to plan for enough time before you want to start your thesis at the host institution. The visa process can be long and complicated, especially if you are not sure which kind of visa applies for you. In my case a J1 visa was the one chosen. Also organizing things like housing, a car (yes, I recommend a car in the US), health care insurance and arranging the details of your thesis with your home and host university can take quite some time. I would advise starting the process half a year in advance.

For any student going to Golden, I would recommend the student housing offered by the University. While the 700 US Dollars charged for a room per month might seem a lot for our Austrian standards, this is an absolutely fair price in Colorado and the convenience and fun of living on campus can only be recommended. As mentioned earlier I also recommend a car. Short weekend trips to the magnificent Arches, Rocky Mountain and other great National Parks would not have been possible otherwise. Golden itself offers many possibilities for sports and recreation, the university campus includes a swimming pool, climbing wall and fitness center. Anyone more into outdoor sports can find many hiking and biking trails right at their doorstep. The Public transport into Denver works exceptionally well for American standards and is free to use for students. Even if you are not a fan of the typical American sports, I recommend visiting either an NFL, NBA and/or NHL game in Denver.

Of course, the research itself was also a lot of hard work and it was more strenuous and costly than simply writing my thesis in Austria. But overall the positive aspects by far outweigh the negative and I am very grateful to everyone who supported me during this endeavor.