

Field Report

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Host University: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, VA

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General impression

Before I started my studies at Virginia Tech University, I was pretty nervous and had general concerns about the long stay abroad. However, these concerns disappeared from the first moment I arrived at the partner institution. I never had the feeling of being alone at any given time. Due to the perfect organization for incoming students at the partner institution, I have been entertained from the very beginning with activities and programs together with other international students. I got to know a lot of people from all kinds of cultures and therefore I have also been able to gain very close friendships. I would even consider my time in the USA as the best time of my life so far. There are endless possibilities to travel the country and make new experiences. Looking back at my time abroad, I do not regret a single thing within this time period.

Quality of the host institution

The arrival at Virginia Tech went smoothly and I was able to find my way around relatively quickly, as the infrastructure on campus and in the surrounding area is extremely well organized. You can find every single university building via Google Maps and there are also electric scooters on campus to get from A to B faster. Once you have seen through the bus system (with the app) you can also take the bus for free anywhere within Blacksburg. Both the spirit of the university and the dimensions are simply breathtaking. The leisure activities are unique and there is something for everyone. There are numerous clubs and sports teams that you can join.

Contacts within the host institution

From the very first contact I had a positive feeling, as the international office of the partner institution was very helpful and courteous at all times. Any questions about the organization could be clarified in advance and possible concerns have been acknowledged. In the first week of the program (one week before the actual semester begins) the orientation week for exchange students starts. That means that a group of about 40 exchange students is gathered, which in the first week is offered all instructions, training and first leisure activities by the IO.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan Students

Since it is only mandatory for freshman students to live in the campus dorms, I would highly recommend searching for a housing possibility off-campus, since it was way cheaper than to live on campus. First, I thought that I could miss a lot of fun opportunities with that decision, but it turned out that this decision was actually way better, since I got really close with my roommates from the semi-detached house I was living in and I also saved a lot of money. I would highly recommend searching for Facebook groups regarding housing and sublets, since I found my accommodation pretty fast and easy that way. Another opportunity is craigslist, or the University's website regarding off-campus housing possibilities.

Another thing I would recommend is to take out the mandatory travel and health insurance in Austria, since it was only 1/3 of the price in comparison to the insurance the host university offered. I also benefited a lot from opening a free checking account of a US bank, since it made payments a lot easier in certain situations. A US mobile data plan is also highly recommended, when you are staying for a longer timer period, but you have to be careful, since the range of plans offered is pretty wide and varies a lot in terms of prices.