

My Second Semester in the United States - Looking Forward Looking Back -

If someone asked me one year ago about my expectations with regard to my personal and professional development I would have given a positive outlook paired with uncertainty. Even though I informed myself well by reading the respective syllabi and asking people who were studying in the United States, it was hard to predict how things might develop in the upcoming months.

It was very helpful for me that there were other participants of the exchange program who already spent a year in Bowling Green. They introduced me to their friends and were guiding me through the numerous big and small tasks which had to be done.

The first weeks at Bowling Green State University were as demanding as exciting. The approach of teaching is completely different to what I have seen and heard of from German universities. The student is highly involved in discussions during class and assigned homework problems force the student to learn constantly throughout the semester. Even though this teaching approach means a lot more work compared to the traditional way of teaching at German universities, it makes the learning process for the student more satisfactory. Next to the way of teaching, the content is closer related to real world problems and stresses more the practical than the theoretical perspective.

One example for this is a class I took in the second semester. It deals with local economic development and is set up like a seminar course. Among other things, the students have to write and present an empirical paper, containing an analysis of risk aspects for local economies.

The idea of making a difference and being part of a project which helps the region, motivated me to volunteer for a summer internship at the Center for Local and Regional Development at Bowling Green State University. During the two month lasting internship, I was able to reorganize the whole database of the project, develop economic models and write a detailed report about communities at risk. Next to that, I could engage my successors in an active learning process, so that they are able to continue the work I started.

After the second semester, I went on my first vacation within the United States. I visited a friend in New York for two weeks. Given the rural area of Bowling

Green, New York City is quite a contrast. However, it was amazing. Seeing Wall Street, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building or the Metropolitan Museum of Art was an almost surreal experience. In addition to the tourist hot spots, there are some things I recommend each New York visitor to do. For example, the Shearwater Sailboat offers a breathtaking view over Manhattan and Liberty Island. Next to the widely recognized Museums like Guggenheim, MoMa or the Metropolitan, the Frick Collection with its outstanding architecture and art is definitely worth a visit.

As exiting New York is from a cultural perspective, as exiting is Washington D.C. from a historical. Standing in front of the White House, the Capitol and the Lincoln Monument was incredible. One can feel history when being where Martin Luther King held his speech or when visiting the National Archives where the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are displayed.

The summer is over now and my last semester at Bowling Green State University has just started. Next to usual student duties, I work for the university as graduate assistant and I am the Graduate Student Senator for the Economics department.

If someone asked me now whether it was a good idea to study in the United States, I would say that it was the best decision I have ever done. The last twelve months contributed to my personal and professional development in a way I have never thought. By the end of December, I will have accomplished my Master's degree and I am going to apply for jobs in the United States as well as in Germany.

In retrospect, I can say the scholarship provided by the VDAC organization was one of the best things ever happened to me. I can only encourage every student to take this great opportunity and experience first-hand what my essay is about.

At the end of this essay, I want to take the chance to thank the people of the VDAC and the DAGN organization for the privilege of studying in the United States.

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