

My trip abroad to do research gave me international working experience, a chance to recognize new parts of the world, a look different into cultural perspectives, and new friends.

My trip abroad had me based in Hamburg, Germany at the University of Hamburg Department of Wood Science for two months. There I worked on research related to the project that I had been working on at Oregon State University: using low-grade woody biomass in wood-plastic composites for highway product applications. I manufactured large panels (46cm x 66cm x 0.5cm), using polypropylene and wood flour. The samples, which I made, were then tested in an acoustic testing chamber in order to measure the sound transmission loss characteristics of the composite.



I lived in a student-work housing arrangement provided through the University of Hamburg. These dormitories housed students from all over Germany and the world while they did apprenticeships and research projects for the university and industry partners associated through the university. My housing was located a little ways from the city center, and fairly far from the institute where I worked. Had to become accustomed to using public transportation systems – the many trains and buses – to get to and from where I needed to be.

Though I had traveled abroad before, I had never worked or studied in one location for an extended time. Living in a European city for two months gives perspective on culture and norms that one would not get as a passerby or tourist on a vacation. One sees everyday-life similarities and differences to home. This includes perspectives in work schedules, customs, and worldviews. Mostly people, having learned I was from

the United States, wanted to talk about politics in the US and US policy abroad. Further, many people I met have traveled to the US and many have had extended stays here for study or business. The people I met are better equipped to work with us than we are to work with them.

Speaking from my limited experience, research in Europe was conducted on a similar scale to what I was used to in the US. However, it did seem that many of the research projects worked much closer with an industrial or commercial partner. Industry seemed more accepting to work with academic institutes and universities.



I also had the opportunity to travel to an international conference in Porto, Portugal (above). Here I had the opportunity to meet researchers from all over Europe and hear what they were working on. Porto was also a beautiful city to visit.

Overall, the trip was a positive experience. It made me realize that there are many opportunities for research, business, and personal interest abroad – and that just as people from all over the world come to study, research, and visit the US, students from the US should do a similar exchange to other places in the world. There is too much to see and do in the world not to.



View of Hamburg harbor.