I. International Experience

University Politécnica de Catalunya (UPC)

The Barcelona Supercomputing Center (BSC) is an associated part of UPC. While at the BSC we were fortunate to be stationed with the developers of Dimemas and Paraver, two tools that we had been working with for a while and interested in using in our work. We were able to learn a lot from them, as well as a lot about them. Throughout our stay, they asked us on multiple occasions what would we like to see improved in their tools, during their passionate meetings/arguments regarding the development of the tools. When we needed help with the tools, they were always happy to assist. They were curious about our usage goals and willing to set aside time to help us.

This gave us a valuable lesson in the lifestyle of a Spanish employee. They certainly did not meet the stereotype of taking excessively long lunch breaks and siestas. However, they did seem more concerned with enjoying their lives than the typical American. Their lunch sessions were never less than an hour, and they always went in groups. There was also at least one social coffee break per day.

MareNostrum

As part of our stay, we received a full tour of the former chapel that is now the holding grounds of MareNostrum, the 10,000+ CPU super computer, currently the largest in Europe. Yes, that’s right, a former chapel. The story behind this is that the chapel used to be part of an all girls’ catholic school. One the school was closed, the buildings and land were given to UPC. A priest was brought in to “de-holy” the chapel so that it could be used for other purposes. It was used for classes and meeting rooms until the BSC was looking for somewhere to install its new supercomputer. Now, you can find over 10,000 processors sitting in what was once the sanctuary; no doubt, this machine is highly thought of.

Some other cool facts were:
- Spark rack was enclosed in a glass chamber, with a dedicated push-pull cooling system.
- All the air is pushed out to the atmosphere outside.

Campus Life

UPC is considered large by European standards, although it is small in comparison to many US universities including FIU. The campus life was quite popular and very Spanish. Coffee/beer/water socials were common throughout the day. In fact, cerveza (beer) was cheaper in the vending machines than water. Yes, that’s right, they served beer in the campus vending machines for a cheaper price than bottled water!

Moby was a common sight to see students and construction workers sprawled out on the grounds in siesta. However, this was not the custom of the university employees. In addition, it was much to Marlon’s relief that most all of the BSC staff spoke English.

La Vida en Barcelona

Barcelona is a beautiful and modern city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea near Spain’s border with France. The city is surrounded by mountains on three sides and the ocean on the fourth which provided for some magnificent and breath taking sites. Antoni Gaudi is regarded as perhaps the most famous architect and a beloved resident of Barcelona and his magnificent sites can be seen all over the city. From his most famous work and Catalunya, La Sagrada Familia, to his less known sites as La Pàt Pau, Gaudi certainly left his mark on the city. For further reading on this beautiful city:

- From the architectural sites, to the beach sites Surrounding the local culture of Catalunya (region surrounding and including Barcelona), there was much to keep us busy outside of our work. Barcelona really afforded us the full experience. From cutting-edge technology and research to rich and proud Spanish culture. We really made the most of our opportunity in relating technology across cultures in a global mindset.

II. Acknowledgement

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International Experience: From 0 to 6 Foreign Countries in 9.5 Weeks

France/England

“support” and “top of the day to put on top of the major European capital cities. Paris and London.

These weekend destinations consisted of quite a few highlights: all are great cities with lots of culture and history spanning the centuries. However, it was a great opportunity to really experience the meaning of a global living laboratory.

We spent the fourth of July weekend in Lisbon where we also, serves as the center of the Catholic church. It was characterized by its cobblestone streets and hilltop buildings. The beaches were nice, too. But, the water was a bit cold. The internet cafe allowed the execution of Puerto in the benchmark’s high right (in Kelvin).

Pire and 5 Pires were the closest to us. However, as any good researcher would do, you never go anywhere without two things: your laptop and your passport. But, within our budget, an extra-curricular trip was in order.

By plane, train, and bus, the PIRE Barcelona team was able to cover a grand total of six countries in 9.5 weeks of weekend backpacking trips. However, while traveling in the states, it was common to see the PIRE students in an internet cafe or the hotel lobby keeping tabs on the experiments and developments in our research.

“On the road, you can experience many different cultures in a short amount of time. You can see the differences in the traditions and lifestyle of the various countries. This can be a great way to learn about other cultures and their customs. It is also an opportunity to make new friends and create lasting memories.”

In Italy, the Eiffel Tower, the Tower of Pisa, and the Colosseum are some of the most famous landmarks.

In Spain, the beach is definitely a must-visit. However, there are also many other cultural landmarks in Spain to explore. For example, the architecture in Granada is stunning. The Alhambra Palace is a great place to visit.

Among the many highlights of our trip, we visited the Spanish Steps in Rome and the Colosseum in Rome.

We also made a stop in London, where we visited the British Museum, Piccadilly Circus, the London Tower Bridge, Hyde Park, Buckingham Palace, and Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre. But, perhaps the biggest highlight of our trip was visiting the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, which is one of the most famous landmarks in Europe.

Some of the other highlights of our trip included:
- Visiting the famous Louvre Museum in Paris.
- Exploring the medieval city of Avignon in France.
- Exploring the castle of Alhambra in Spain.
- Exploring the beautiful town of Annecy in France/England.

Conclusions

To sum up, our experience was about developing new avenues as a person and in our research by reaching across cultural boundaries to really experience the meaning of a global living laboratory. The PIRE program offered us a unique opportunity to take on technology from a different perspective than that we receive in our traditional studies. Furthermore, forging working relationships with our international collaborators serves as a big step towards making breakthrough contributions to the research community.

Beyond the walls of research, PIRE afforded us the opportunity to develop as individuals, both professionally and personally. We were given the opportunity to really explore the world and see the opportunity to really explore the world and see a race in the racecar in the first year of this program. As a result, we were able to pilot the car for the first year to come. In this program, there is an opportunity for our home institution.

The experiences we gathered here will be invaluable in the rest of our academic careers as well as our subsequent professional careers.