

SOLOMON GEBRAHAN

Travel report on the PEARC 18 with the “HACKATHON” experience

We started our trip early in the morning from the Viking village in Elizabeth City to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. We drove more than 8 hours to get there. The journey was really exhausting. But on the way over there we got the chance to see some beautiful landscapes and the amazing work of Mother Nature. One thing that amused me the most was this one huge hill in between Virginia and DC. It was my first time exploring that side of the country so I was really enjoying that part of the trip. After a few traffic stuff and turns we finally reached our destination. We checked in to our rooms and immediately we were asked to report downstairs to this welcoming meeting. This opening or some may call it orientation took place at 4:30. This program was all about workforce student program activities was announced by Mr. Ricardo Gonzalez. He welcomed to the PEARC18 program. We were able to meet all the people that were behind this PEARC 18 conference. After the introduction part we had a two presentation. The first presentation was a lady from the FBI. This specific presentation was really interesting to me. The reason I was really interested in the specific presentation was because one day I would love to work for the FBI. That is a dream of mine. So this lady was telling us all about the things that are required to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Things like you have to stay away from drugs (weed, cocaine and heroin). The ACT/SAT score have to be extremely high. And most of all you have to be completely honest when giving an interview. Because if you lie about anything they are going to find out and also they will ask you for one of your close friends to give an interview about you so it is really important to be honest. She was also talking about how this job will allow you to work internationally. She explained her experiences of working internationally. She particularly mentioned her time of working in the east of Europe. She mentioned in could be challenging but it was worth it since she is making sure millions of lives are safe. She concluded her presentation by mentioning to be careful in every step because people might get the wrong idea of you. So act like you are being watched because you are. The second presentation was mostly about biological study. This presentation was by Professor Mike Birch from Pittsburg. He talked about planetology which is a branch of biology that deals with the condensed matter of the solar system and especially with the planets and their moons. He explained more about his research purpose and who is funding him to do all those important projects. That was all Professor Mike Birch talked about in the opening ceremony. After that we just grabbed some snakes and hanged for a little big. Tried to get to know the people around, introduced ourselves and went back to our room. After a couple of hours we went out as a group and got some dinner. On the way I got the chance to explore the city a little bit. Pittsburg got lots of good restaurants. And the city looked so amazing at night with the lights and everything it was so beautiful. We grabbed dinner from this nice little restaurant on the side of the street. I also meat some interesting people on the way to dinner people from different side of the country was attending this conference so the chance of meeting new people was really high. After a little chat and a little bit of walk we called it a night and went back to our room.

SOLOMON GEBRAHAN

The next day we had a lot on our plates. First we had our breakfast at the hotel's reception and I personally went to a python tutorial. This tutorial started at 8:30 in the morning and it ended at 12:00 in the afternoon. In this tutorial I learned some more things about python and also they talked about the Jupiter notebook. It was really interesting. We tried to do some exercises but it wasn't successful because of the internet connection. But still I tried to get the best I can out of this tutorial. After 12:00 we had lunch. Lunch was great; still this was the chance to meet some more new people in the dining hall. I meet some guy from Eduardo, he was from UVA engineering he told me some internship opportunities for next summer. He even email me some links to apply. I was really happy to meet a guy like him. He gave me his card and lunch was over. After lunch I was on Volunteer duty. The volunteer was just to collect surveys from the audience and turn them back to the meeting comities. And making sure everything was on track. After 2 hours I was done with volunteer duty for the day and went back to my room. There was another tutorial that I attended late in the afternoon. It was about Anaconda (Python distribution). Anaconda is a free and open source distribution of the Python and R programming languages for data science and machine learning related applications (large-scale data processing, predictive analytics, scientific computing), that aims to simplify package management and deployment. I was there for a couple of hours. Around 8:30 I went out with a friend I meat from Virginia tech. we went to an Inclined to Ride or Funicular Fun in Pittsburgh, PA. This was really fun we got the chance to see the city in night time. The view was amazing; from the top you can see everything. The lighting, the lack, and the buildings were delighting to watch. We took a couple of pictures on the hills and walked around a little bit to get a different view of the city, after a while we called it a night and went back to our rooms. The next day I had to get up early because I had another volunteer duty. I was up around 6:00 and they told us to help out with the poster's set ups. There were many posters that we had to help set up. After we get done with that we had the modeling competition. They assigned us to a group of four and they gave us a problem to solve using python and some of physics. Our specific project focuses on modeling the fall of the skydiver Felix Baumgartner and his famous "Stratos" jump in 2012 and plotting his position and velocity in free fall and after he opens his parachute. We basically tried to take the example code of a ball in the air with velocity, height, and time & we tried to incorporate that in Felix's famous parachute jump. This was a fun project we the chance to play with the codes and I personally enjoyed the physics part a lot. They gave us some time to prepare our power point and we were able to present them on the next day. There was also a student mentor dinner my mentor's name was Randall Downer. He was a High Performance Computing Applications Manager. He worked for Colby College. His areas of Areas of Expertise were High Performance Computing, Scientific Computing, and Software Integration. I got a lot out of him. He told me to be passionate about what I am working on and to explore some more knowledge to help me with my coding. He explained to me about his good experience and the things that he achieved throughout his long career. After dinner we exchanged emails and we left. The next day was really busy with volunteers work and everything. There was also the networking program. It was like going around the lobby area(that is where all the conference attendance set up their stuff). I

SOLOMON GEBRAHAN

walked around and asked them about what they got in their stations. I got some interesting ideas and also some business cards from Indian university. They gave us shirt, pans and hats with their company's logo on it. After that I got some dinner and went to sleep. The next day we had another student-mentor lunch. Me and my mentor talked about some of my future plans. And there was a speaker from the NIA; he talked about how we could get money for researches and how we could take advantage of opportunities that are provided by the NIA. It was interesting I learned about new things about the NIA; after lunch, we went outside to take pictures all student volunteer were in the photos. At the last day of our PEARC 18 we just had the closing lunch and there was also the award ceremony that took place on the same day. They had awards for best poster, for the best paper and so on after that and we got back to our rooms and started to get ready for the "HACKATHON" this event took place from Thursday 2pm until Friday 5 o'clock. This one of the most challenging things I faced in a while we had to stay up for 24 hours and worked on a project our project was basically collecting data that are related with weather from the Atlanta Georgia using tweeter. We tried to figure out the most re-tweets, hash tags and likes and we tried to come up with a word cloud with the most popular tweets. And we presented that to our monitors and judges. That was just about it for this part. The next day that is on Saturday we got up early in the morning around 5 and we went made our way to ECSU.

In conclusion I really enjoyed this PERC18 conference. I meat some important and interesting people that can help with my career, I also enjoyed the city very well. I hope to attend it next year in Chicago. This concludes my travel report.