Mentoring the Next Generation  by Clark Evans

Over a three-day period in April, I had the opportunity to host a unique visitor to NCAR. Each April, in Cleveland, Ohio, one of the local high schools requires all of its junior-level students to spend three days shadowing someone in a career that they are considering for themselves in the future. Not surprisingly, the majority of the students stay close to Cleveland for their shadowing experience. However, this year, that was not the case for one of their students. Buoyed by a love of Colorado and the outdoors, Megan Seaman seized upon her interest in climate science and climate change to seek out a shadowing opportunity here at NCAR.

Over the course of her three days here at NCAR, Megan got to experience much of the scientific side of NCAR. Each day brought new opportunities to meet with a number of scientists across NCAR, ranging from division heads to a number of other postdoctoral researchers, and to discuss both what they do for a living as well as the paths that they took to get to where they are today in their careers.

Though I can't speak for Megan, I must say that I was amazed at the wide range of paths that many of us have taken to get to where we are today at NCAR! Seminars on the use of ensemble forecast products in flood forecasting in Europe from RAL and aerial instrumentation technology used in part in hurricanes from EOL provided Megan with opportunities to learn about how research results are communicated and how instrumentation, research, and forecasting all go hand in hand with one another. In addition, each day also brought about a unique.

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July Fellows Socials

Due to busy travel schedules, the Fellows Association Social Committee isn't planning any July events. However, any postdoc or graduate student should feel free to make use of the Fellows email list to organize a gathering or meet-up at any time. This applies to NCAR staff and visitors alike; the list is for you!

grad-postdoc-assn@mailman.ucar.edu
Visa Nightmare  Rashmi Mittall

The first thing is although all Schengen country consulates give the same visa, except the United Kingdom, the list of required documents mentioned on each website is little different and so is the process of applying and the processing time. Also, the Colorado cases are considered by the consulates in Los Angeles for most of these foreign countries, and these are some of the most crowded consulates in the United States. Let me tell you what happened in these two consulates.

For the French visa, there were number of options for short-term visas. Of these choices, it was extremely confusing as to which visa a postdoc should apply for: a researcher visa or a student visa. I tried communication channel to get information on that, but unfortunately, did not succeed as no one ever picks up the phone or replies to emails at the French Consulate in Los Angeles. They kept my passport and asked me to send the document by mail. After returning to Colorado, I contacted my French host about this document; he informed me that this document is issued by the French government and that it takes at least a few months to prepare. Since I didn’t have time to wait for months and I had to go to Vienna in less than 20 days, I dropped the plan of going to France and called the French Embassy to get (continued on Page 4)

The ASP Hike, July 27th: Please Come!

Join us for a hike on July 27th first thing in the morning. The group will leave the ML Damon Room at 8:15 for a 1+ hour hike. Please plan to arrive on the shuttle or shortly thereafter so we can leave promptly at 8:15. We’ll have water and granola bars on hand to take with you on the hike. When we return, we’ll reward ourselves with breakfast at 9:30. If hiking isn’t an option for you, please join us for breakfast only at 9:30.

All postdocs and graduate students at NCAR are invited to join us, even if you are just visiting. In addition, we’d like to extend a special invitation to all Graduate Visitor Program and Faculty Fellowship Program participants as well. An email will be sent requesting an RSVP later in the month.
Mentoring the next generation (continued)

opportunity to partake in active research at NCAR. On her first day, she got to take a tour of one of ACD’s chemistry labs with Paul Winkler. Along the way, she got to see a brief demonstration of one of the instruments that Paul uses to conduct his research. The next day, Megan got to explore the Marshall Field Site with Julie Theriault, Lulin Xue, and Jasper Kok. While there, Julie detailed many of the instruments used at the field site to gather a wide array of research data, including those most related to her own research of winter precipitation types and structures. On her last day, I gave Megan a walkthrough of the Weather Research & Forecasting (WRF) numerical weather prediction model, showing her how we use such tools to study meteorological phenomena and allowing her to play around with some of the data obtained from a simulation I had conducted earlier that day. We topped her entire visit off with a discussion about university programs in the climate and atmospheric sciences and how she could apply all that she had experienced this week into furthering her chances in this field. In all, Megan came away excited from her visit and intrigued by the work done at NCAR.

While the primary objective of the shadowing event was for Megan to get to experience life as an NCAR scientist, I gained a lot from the experience as well. While I have long known that I would like to mentor young scientists as part of my career, I had yet to have an opportunity such as this to do so over a prolonged period of time until Megan visited NCAR. This opportunity allowed me the chance to gain experience in doing so, particularly in terms of organizing such a visit, communicating what I and others do to a non-specialist, and in understanding how to best engage Megan in the material and opportunities here at NCAR. Even more so than all of that, her visit helped solidify in my mind that I would like to mentor young scientists as part of my career, I had yet to have an opportunity such as this to do so over a prolonged period of time until Megan visited NCAR. This opportunity allowed me the chance to gain experience in doing so, particularly in terms of organizing such a visit, communicating what I and others do to a non-specialist, and in understanding how to best engage Megan in the material and opportunities here at NCAR. Even more so than all of that, her visit helped solidify in my mind that I would like to mentor or advise others in the future. Finally, I appreciated the opportunity to join Megan on her laboratory and field site visits. While we have many opportunities as post-doctoral scientists to learn about the research conducted by our colleagues in other divisions, there are not many regular opportunities to actually join them in the lab or in the field to see how that research is being conducted. Without this opportunity, I still would look at the top of FL-0 and wonder what their greenhouse was used for or I would still run past the Marshall Field Site on 66th St. south of Boulder and wonder how all of the instrumentation was used.

Though this experience may have been one of a kind, I certainly encourage anyone who has an interest in mentoring or advising to take advantage of all of the opportunities available to us here at NCAR, such as serving as a mentor to a student in the highly successful SOARS program or guiding a high school student through research in the new high school internship program. The experience will not only likely be very rewarding for the student that you mentor but for yourself as well.

The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own.

-Benjamin Disraeli
my passport back. Again they didn’t pick up the phone, but this time, after two days they called me to find out if I wanted to proceed with the French visa; I asked them to return my passport. So the Second thing I learned here is that one must apply well in advance for a visa, at least 2-3 months beforehand.

Due to bad weather, it took 3 days to get my passport back from the French Embassy, and there was only one and half weeks left before my conference in Vienna. I learned at the French Embassy that if all of the documents are fine, the embassy will issue a visa the same day. So I thought I would give it a shot. Again I collected all the documents, but for a tourist visa this time, and flew to the Austrian Embassy in LA. This time, they told me that they need at least two to three weeks to check all the documents and that there is no way that they could issue the visa on the same day. That was really disappointing. At my request they said they would try to help me out as a special case, but they still would require at least two days. I agreed to that, but they were not satisfied with my proof of travel insurance. I took a letter from NCAR stating that I am insured completely, but they wanted a letter from the insurance company with a lot more detail. It was very confusing for me because, in my last experience, the French Embassy was satisfied with the same proof of travel insurance. At that point I realized that, although all of these consulates are giving the same visa, they need different documents and work differently. For example, the French visa required confirmed airline tickets while the Austrian Embassy stated that the travel itinerary is sufficient. I did get my visa from the Austrian Embassy for 6 days, but that was not sufficient as it was too late for the previous itinerary and for new one the visa days were not sufficient. At least the end result was a visa and not rejection; a rejection can make it very difficult to get another visa in the future.

In a nutshell, from my experience, I would suggest that one should apply for a visa way in advance (2 to 3 months) because even though you may have collected all the documents mentioned on their website, they may ask for something new or different. Thus, give yourself time for that. Get an employment letter from your host division along with any relevant travel documents from the travel office. Make sure to determine if a confirmed ticket is needed or if a booked itinerary is sufficient. Finally, you will need a letter from your host that clearly states the purpose of your visit.