Grace Hopper Celebration 2019- Report

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Orlando, Florida
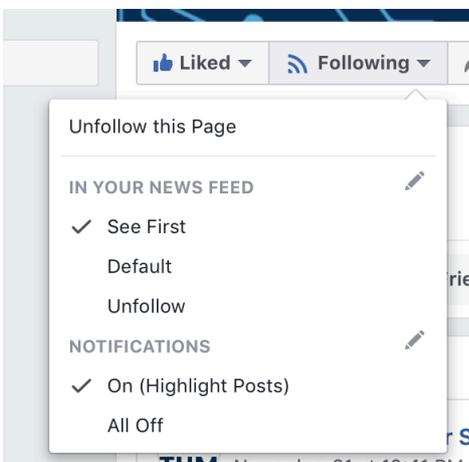
What is Grace Hopper Celebration?

Grace Hopper Celebration is a technical conference known as the "world's largest gathering of women technologists"[1]. Every year, thousands of women in computing from all over the world come together to celebrate each other and inspire the future generations to come. It is a 4-day conference and involves women from all walk of IT and Computing. It offers the chance to attend multiple workshops, seminars, talks, and career development opportunities. The female leaders in respective industries and backgrounds share their experiences and present their works using different activities.

So, you can find all about GHC on the internet, but here I will walk you through my experience as a Travel Grant Holder to GHC and I hope it helps you in your perusal as well… :)

How did I find out about the Travel Grant?

For a person like me, who is not at the campus very often and relies on video lectures and online FAQs, finding a flyer that promotes the grant is hard. Therefore, the Informatik-Forum Frauen's Facebook Page , which posts all their events and opportunities regularly, proved as a great help. To prioritise their updates on your timeline and never miss any information, you can simply follow the following steps:

Facebook Page > Follow> Hover over the Following Button> See First and Notifications On.

Application Process, GHC Ticket, & Visa

The application process is simple. The students of Department of Informatics can apply by submitting their :

-Letter of Motivation
-CV
-Transcript.

The motivation letter is very important for your application and should be convincing. Therefore, I wrote my heart out and my motivation to attend GHC. Later in June, I couldn't keep calm when I received the acceptance to GHC. I couldn't believe it and my excitement was on cloud 9. However, this acceptance was not enough. There was another challenge to secure the GHC Conference Ticket because their server breaks down due to huge traffic and you have to be very quick to click on the links. It was very nice of IFF to guide us through the ticket buying process. We, the three grant holders of 2019 and previous grant holder, met together to book the ticket. I would suggest to follow the GHC Facebook page where they posted different ticket links for students and general attendees. It proved beneficial since we landed up on the correct page and bought the tickets quickly.

As soon as I had received the acceptance, I had started gathering all the required documents for US Visa, one can find all the information all the information here. I would suggest to **book an appointment as soon as possible** since, the dates fill up very fast and you do not want to delay the process. To get the **passport size photo** for US Visa, I went to **Flash Fotolabor München, Hohenzollernstraße 90**, **Munich.** The service was quick and they already knew the exact photo requirements. At the end, I had received my Visa within two days after my appointment.

Flight and Hotel Booking (Bankruptcy Incident)

Well, this was the most complicated part of my trip. I wanted my reimbursement process to be smooth, so I booked my flight and hotel with a travel agency because they would provide separate bills and receipts for every thing and it would be easier to mention in the reimbursement. Everything was well and good in the beginning and I paid the whole amount for flight and hotel. However, few days before the flight was scheduled for Florida, the company, Thomas Cook, filed a bankruptcy and the agency through which I had booked the hotel had used services of another company, which was a part of Thomas Cook and the hotel booking was cancelled. This came as a big shock since the time was ticking. Luckily, the flight was saved because the agency booked it through another service. However, Professor Anne Brüggemann-Klein, the founder of IFF was very helpful at this time and lent us the money

to book a new hotel. She was very quick in her responses and solved the matter with great ease. I had a nice place to stay. :)

Now, the **important part of finding** the hotel is that you should check if it falls on the list of **Shuttle Service provided by GHC.** This saves a lot of cost on travelling. The shuttle runs **every 15 mins** from the hotel to the convention center.

The moral of the story, in my opinion of booking the flight and hotel, I don't think booking through the agent is really helpful if you are already disciplined to keep all the bills and receipts separately on your name.

Sight seeing and transportation in Orlando

We arrived in Orlando three days prior to the start of the conference to enjoy the tourist attractions and theme parks. We had booked a nice Airbnb for those days and cooked our own food which saved us a lot of money. To move around in Orlando, **PLEASE DOWNLOAD UBER, LIFT AND PAYPAL IF YOU DONT HAVE ALREADY.**

Orlando has a lot of theme parks. I visited three of them, Nasa Space Center, Sea World and Universal Studios. For Nasa, we took the Greyline tours. It was very convenient since they had a nice transportation service. You can also checkout the Visit Orlando page which also provide more information on travels in Orlando.

Attending the Conference

It was a 4-day conference and I must say those were one of the best 4 days of my life. I met so many inspiring and like minded women with such great journey behind them. The whole experience was both overwhelming and exciting. The conference offers so many diverse topics to dive into. These topics can be found on their online tool through which you can register. Since there are a lot of topics, it took me l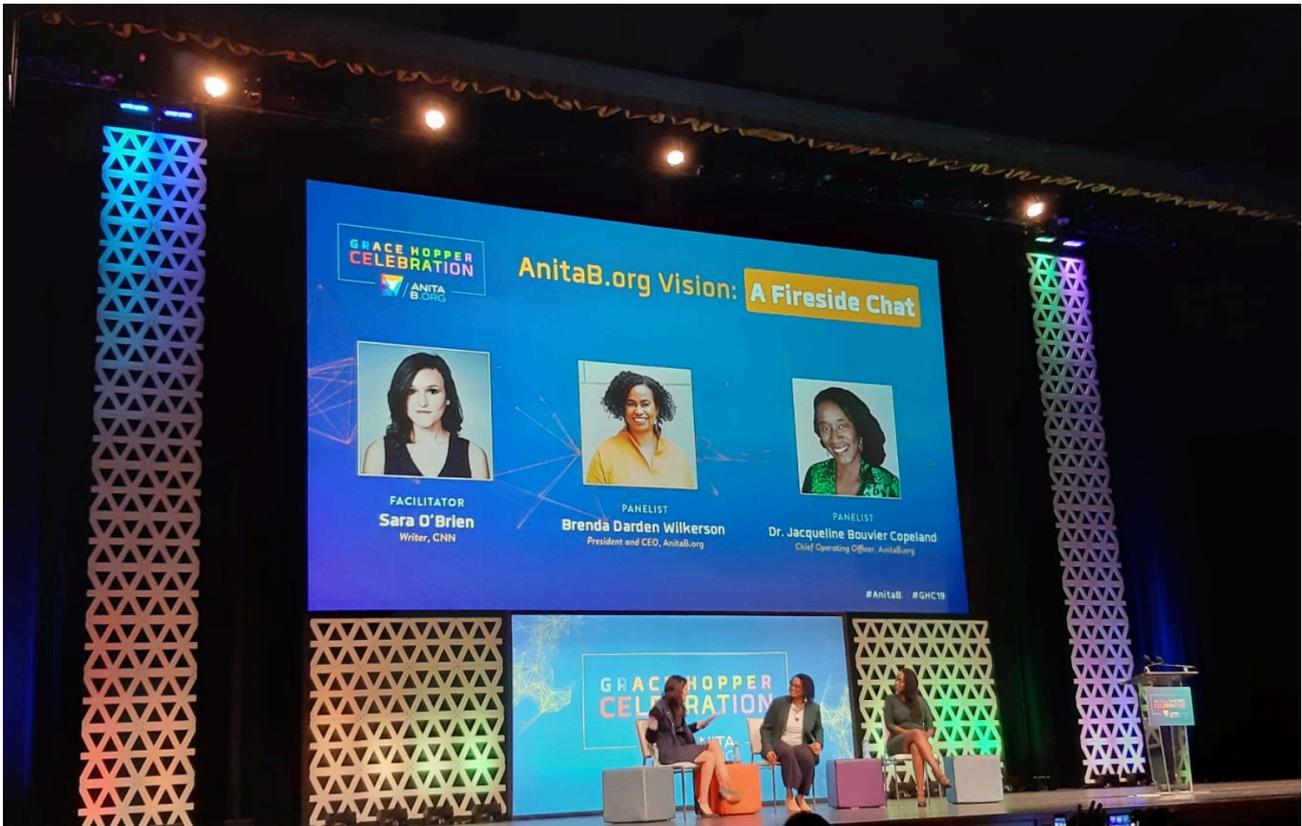ike 2 hours or so to register in all of the sessions I wanted to attend. There were some sessions that I missed because of the clashes with other but it doesn't matter as long as you attending something you like. For me the hot topics were AR/VR sessions and I attended most of those. After registering in those, they also appear as a schedule in the **GHC App** which helped in navigating through the convention center which was huge. The GHC App is also good for connecting with others if you want to. The sessions like the keynotes are registered by default for everyone.

The first day was about badge collection, opening keynote and introduction to the career fair. You have to reach early to collect the badges if you don't want to wait in the line and miss the keynote. I reached there super early and got it on time. The keynote was very inspiring and the female leaders showed us how they overcome the challenges to be a boss! ;) It left me inspired to the core that I too want to have a startup of my own in Munich someday.:) The career fair is held all the four days and you can apply at their booths. The companies are all over from the US and its a good chance if you want to work

in the US. On their booths, they also give you a lot of free stuff. :P

You can also **submit your resume in the GHC Database** and get your interview scheduled on site and even get hired. This is a very nice service provided by them and if you are looking for an internship or full time opportunity. For me, it was not the case so I didn't submit my resume.The second and third day, for me it was mainly the AR/VR sessions. I had an amazing time there as I am very passionate about AR. I had a chance to connect with many of the presenters of the sessions and discuss with them about the different approaches and ideas in AR.

There were some panel discussions that I attended and it left me moved. One of the panelist, had a great impact on

my life since I also have somewhat the similar story as her. I met her talked to her about our similarities and she gave me some great advices too. Another exciting thing that I happened with me was I won the **giveaway ticket to the GHC 2020**. It was pure luck and I couldn't have been happier to come back to such a wonderful place again. The last day I also attended a few sessions on Data Science, great closing keynote and super nice evening celebration.

In the end, I would like to say that make the most out of your time at the conference and connect as much as possible since you never know who you will meet in the future. Don't get overwhelmed by so many people. Just learn and make a lot of memories. :)

Sources:
[1] https://ghc.anitab.org/2019-attend/

Bankruptcy image:

What happens to your Financial Accounts in Bankruptcy, https://finance.yahoo.com/news/happens-financial-accounts-bankruptcy-163300337.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS88&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAIzksTpL1uB0j3EF7WEYZs83BpGIMXV7jx7l5TB_L_VI_iOM5QhKumnb1-rMbLowT5YmqDsu5vFWdgxsjezMH8EFNk9MMevqRZYVmqLPyACGq5TnWrTbLM6pPTJlMM8GUdsAgU-so1THaNgc2gPFgZjIRwTbHFUXK7LU5jM3VxYg