

Field Report

Home university: University of Innsbruck, Austria

Host university: University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas, USA

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General impression

I am very grateful for having been provided this opportunity to spend four-month as a visiting scholar at the University of Texas at Arlington (UT Arlington). My impressions of UT Arlington, the faculty and students, the campus, and the city-center of Arlington are very positive. Spending four months as a research scholar in the United States, exchanging information with other researchers, and seeking a new source of knowledge was a unique experience. In addition, getting to know new people in the U.S. from all over the world telling about their fascinating cultures was a great professional and personal benefit of this program.

Host university

The academic partnership between UT Arlington and the University of Innsbruck goes back 32 years. In my project, we built upon this partnership, expanding the architecture and built environment focus to civil and environmental engineering. Developing this collaboration with an interdisciplinary team of professors focusing on infrastructural systems, water resources, and ecological environments was a unique opportunity. I found the supervisors at the host university very friendly and helpful. They supported me with all the equipment I needed during my research period. They went above and beyond to make it possible to become a visiting scholar in the middle of a global pandemic and limited visa opportunities. While the Office of International Education in Texas first claimed there is no chance a visa could be issued, the supervisors took the lead and ensured a smooth process removing all bureaucratic obstacles.

In addition, I enjoyed the sports facilities at UT Arlington with an adequately equipped training environment. Also, the food court and dining options were great. The campus is beautifully designed, very clean, and close to Downtown.

Integration at the host university

The international student services offered by the Office of International Education at UT Arlington were not ideal. They scheduled a virtual orientation meeting in the second week of my stay and provided general information about the university. However, it was truly the academic supervising team who organized everything regarding my stay. Especially Prof. Oswald Jenewein, the head of this academic partnership, helped me immensely with the visa process and in the early weeks of the stay: from the accommodation, transportation, to office access, and networking opportunities. He deeply cares for this academic partnership and made sure everything is organized well. Generally, I felt very welcomed at the university. The academic supervisors made up for the lack of support by the international office.

I met several international students, including fellow Iranians - UTA has a great international community and celebrates diversity. Besides, I had several meetings with other Ph.D. students, which led to additional collaborations for joint publications.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan Scholarship Holders

Texas is a beautiful state with friendly people. I would strongly suggest using this opportunity to travel to the cities in Texas. Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Corpus Christi are interesting cities to explore. It would be better to rent or buy a car during your stay in Texas, as public transportation systems are often not available.