



MARSHALL PLAN SCHOLARSHIP FIELD REPORT AFTER STAY

PERSONAL DETAILS

First name	Kamenik	Middle name	Sophia
Last name	Anna		
Research period at University of San Francisco, California			
From (DD.MM.YY)	01.03.2016	To (DD.MM.YY)	30.06.2016

FINAL FIELD REPORT (2 pages):

General impression of your research stay
<p>I spent three months at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) as a visiting student to research at the lab of Prof. Brian Shoichet. The main focus of the group of Prof. Shoichet is molecular docking. My intention was to append state-of-the art techniques of computer aided drug design. The UCSF is one of the most prestigious medical schools in the U.S. The campus includes lecture halls, research labs and several hospitals and is very lively. Due to the proximity of clinic and university the security level is very high. UCSF is a grad school, meaning there are no undergraduate students. Students and professors and staff are very professional, but also very friendly. On my first day I was invited to an onboarding session with other scientists and students that newly started that week. We were given all the information about the university facilities and organizations. Further there is a dedicated international students office, which organizes events like bonfires at the beach and hiking trips but also English-training hours. They also regularly organize talks where you can get all the information about your Visa-situation and how to acquire an American social security number and so on.</p> <p>The campus is spread over the whole city, but connected with shuttle buses which made it easy to transfer between different locations. The Shoichet lab is situated in the Mission Bay Campus, very near to downtown San Francisco. San Francisco itself is an outstandingly wonderful vibrant city, but also very expensive. You will at least need 2000-3000\$ per month (including rent and everything). Since a few months it is possible to apply for student housing up to three months as a visiting scholar, but also on campus the rent will be around 1000\$. Still, it was worth every penny! The research at UCSF is cutting edge and San Francisco is an awesome city to explore.</p>

Quality of the host institution in regard to research opportunity
<p>The group of Prof. Shoichet is one of the leading groups in computational drug discovery. I was able to work with brand new drug design techniques. The infrastructure at the Shoichet lab and UCSF in general is flawless. The lab comprises a classic wet lab section for experimental testing including state-of-the-art equipment. Further a large "dry lab" section is just across the hall. The dry lab is the computational lab, where I was working with the rest of the scientists to study novel docking protocols. Moreover I had the opportunity to join the lab manager of the Shoichet group in the wet lab for a day of practical work. Thus, besides the theoretical study of proteins I also gained knowledge about protein purification and binding assays.</p> <p>During my stay I was involved in several different research projects in addition to the one I proposed. I was supported and trained by the whole Shoichet group. Further I had the opportunity to train other scientists from other institutions or UCSF research groups that were interested in molecular docking screens. The internal collaborations between at UCSF are manifold and the scientific exchange is high-class.</p>

Contact within the host institution, academic opportunity for academic collaboration during stay

I was warmly welcomed at the Shoichet lab and appreciated very dedicated training. I really felt like part of the group during and also after work. I participated in the weekly group meeting and had the opportunity to present my work and my project. Furthermore, I got weekly feedback on my current work status from Prof. Shoichet himself as well as from other senior scientists. I really enjoyed the close collaboration and honest discussions.

I was introduced to many other researchers of UCSF, from other groups or faculties. During my stay I worked together with several different people of various scientific backgrounds from other groups and other universities.

Every week there are several talks with invited speakers. Anybody can go there, I heard several talks to very up-to-date topics. It is definitely worth to regularly check out the black boards and look for interesting talks and seminars.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan applicants

The Visa process can be very exhaustive, be sure you start applying early enough. The international students office will help you beforehand and support you with information on how to apply. Also, if you are on a J1 you will not be allowed to reenter the U.S. after your research stay has ended. You do have a grace period of 30 days though. So if you want to travel after your research stay, better stay inside the states. You will have to apply for an ESTA to reenter the states after a trip for example to Mexico after your official research stay has ended.

San Francisco itself is very lively and modern, but also very expensive. Be sure you bring enough funds, the Marshall Plan Scholarship is very generous, but you might need more for a city like San Francisco. Further, San Francisco is beautiful in the spring, but during the summer (July, August) it is cold and rainy. If you drive an hour in any direction you will find sun though. The surrounding area is very beautiful, especially the National Parks in California are worth a visit. In any case, bring a rain jacket! The microclimate in the Bay Area is very different from the South of California. So even on sunny days, once the fog makes its way to cover the city it gets a little chilly.

UCSF is a very "social" university, there are regular events, like Trivia at the Pub, where you can get to know a lot of people from different departments. It is easy to connect to other people there and you should really try to attend to these events, mostly because it's free and it's fun!

Contact Email after completion of research stay

a.s.kamenik@gmail.com