

# Personal Report

Prof. C.M. Barbu my supervisor at the University of Applied Sciences Salzburg in Austria encouraged me to undertake my internship at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville under the supervision of Prof. Adam M. Taylor which was an outstanding opportunity for my personal development as well as for my career. My project was possible due to the generous financial support of the Marshall Plan Foundation, which I am very thankful for.

## **Overall impression of the research period**

Generally, the research at the UTK (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) was a very exciting and enriching experience for me. I highly improved my problem-solving skills and I now feel even more confident working on research topics in laboratory conditions. I also think that I can use the insightful experience from the research work I performed to be more confidently and skilfully in different areas of my studies. Moreover, it impressed me at that I had the chance to work with highly skilled people from different institutions.

## **Quality of the research institution**

The UTK is a large University in the United States, with about 28,000 students, I can only state my opinion about the Center of Renewable Carbon, where my workplace was situated. The Center of Renewable Carbon is the major research institution in Tennessee for forestry and Wood technology. It is placed in the heart of Knoxville right next to the Downtown. It also has its own library, which is actively used by the students. In the CRC, I was given a workplace in an office that was used by two other researchers. Despite the office, I also had access to the offices of my research group where I could use any equipment if needed. It is also worth mentioning that having access to one UTK institution makes it possible to visit all the other institutions and, most importantly, use their libraries. This is very valuable, as in the US it is not always easy to access university buildings where you are not enrolled. Last but not least, it was Prof. Taylor my supervisor at the CRC who helped me to be able to go to different laboratories within the country and to improve my skills in analytical tests and measurements. Despite his heavy workload, he always showed interest in my progress, provided me with thoughtful and timely feedback. He allowed me to develop my own ideas and methods for the research while also exposing me to a wide array of ideas, thoughts, and views.

## **Integration in the research institution/organization**

From the beginning to the end of my stay, the climate within my research group was encouraging, collaboration, cooperation and teamwork. I continuously present the progress of my research to my supervisor and he helped me to give orientation in performing my projects mostly freely. I always

received great support from all colleges from CRC and also from other employees from the University. Furthermore, I could listen to presentations of the other researchers, where I was also always welcome to ask questions whether I was new to their field or not. Moreover, other researchers from China or from Hungary also presented their current research in the field of Organosolv fractionation, in order to get suggestions on how to improve their projects or to establish collaborations in certain projects. This open-minded, highly skilled and encouraging environment helped me tremendously in executing my project at the CRC.

### **Recommendations for future MPS scholars/fellows**

There are several reasons why I can highly recommend CRC at the UTK. First of all, the teaching professors are highly skilled experts in their respective fields. They also encourage and support their students to perform at their best in their individual fields of research while also allowing them to discover their own way of looking at problems. Furthermore, being a part of CRC also means that you can access every other UTK institution and benefit from their many resources. The situation of the CRC itself is also highly convenient as it is right in the heart of Knoxville. Naturally, being in Knoxville itself is a tremendous opportunity. I can only recommend to all future MPS scholars at the UTK to not only engage in their studies but to also experience the rich cultural life of Knoxville the city of and the US in general, as researching in a new environment is also about getting to know other ways of life and, hence, new ways of thinking. Most importantly, the Market square which offers numerous events and Meetups that one absolutely needs to be a part of.

### **Contact information (email address) after the research period**

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