

Personal Report

General Impression of Research Stay Abroad

Generally, my involvement with the research project was very positive. I got a lot of hands on experience with different methods for testing the stiffness of timbers and everyone involved in the project was ready to offer help and support. The Forest Products Laboratory had an office and internet connection available for my use but I spent most of my time in the forest stands where trees were sourced or at the in-field testing facility from Whole Trees Architecture and Structure.

As an American who was born and raised in the US, I did not experience any cultural shock although after 10 years abroad I do have moments in the US where reverse culture shock sets in and I notice small things that have changed. One of the largest changes I've noticed is the continual decrease in the quality of network news.

Quality of Host Institution

The host institution, the Forest Products Laboratory, is one of the finest research facilities in the US for forest products. It is a part of the USDA Forest Service and is located in Madison, Wisconsin.

The project I worked on was based out of the Engineering Mechanics Laboratory (EML) of the Forest Products Laboratory (FPL), which is a new 90,000 square foot research facility which consolidates research activities, allowing for maximum collaboration between scientists and with outside partners. The EML has a wide range of testing, equipment, and environmentally-controlled conditioning rooms which are maintained and operated by a professional and technical staff with over 100 years of experience in the field of structural testing of wood, wood components, and connections. It is truly a state of the art testing facility.

The only drawback is their budgets have been tightened significantly in recent years, which makes it difficult for them to satisfy demand for research projects from outside partners.

Contacts within Host Institution

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Recommendations for Future Marshall Plan Students and Fellows

Applying for a Marshall Plan Scholarship or Fellowship for a research project at the Forest Products Laboratory is definitely something I would recommend. They conduct many research projects that would be of interest for students not only of forestry products but also chemistry, structural engineering and even computer science. If someone is interested, I would suggest potential applicants start by checking the forest products laboratory website to see if any of the research emphasis areas line up with their field of study. If so, they should identify employees responsible for research in that area and get in touch with them directly to see if any research projects they have planned for the time period they are interested in spending abroad. You may not immediately get an answer since employees at the FPL tend to be very busy, but if you're persistent and explain how you can help them reach their research goals, you'll likely be able to convince them to extend you an invitation to participate in a research project.

Generally, I recommend any Austrian student looking to conduct research in the US look into applying for a Marshall Plan Scholarship. It is a great program and you receive more than enough funding to cover travel and living expenses while you are there.

Contact E-Mail

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