

Field Report

Boston Area and the Whitehead Institute

Unfortunately, I could not experience much of Boston and its greater area, because I basically worked 6 times a week in the Lab for about 80 hours on average, which is the upper extreme of a typical work regime at the Whitehead Institute. Nevertheless, I had the opportunity to get to know MIT and its affiliates to a greater extent. If you work at the Whitehead, or its neighbours such as the Koch, or Broad Institute you are eligible to attend various seminars, talks and events, held by Nobel prize laureates, several national academy of science members and experience the tip of the spear of scientific progress. It is an excellent opportunity getting to know of what it takes working in a cutthroat environment and prepares the student for future endeavours by giving an idea of how people operate within the 1% of scientific excellence. If you are serious about doing a PhD this is the place to be; you are confronted with state-of-the-art methods, equipment and research on a daily basis. The laboratories of the Whitehead Institute are filled with more than 300 emerging scientists, scientists in training and nearly half of them come from other countries. Needless to say, that it is a great place to encounter different nationalities and experiencing different cultures as well. During my stay I had an overwhelmingly positive experience working with the people at Whitehead, everyone was very helpful, kind and eager to exchange their scientific experience. Whitehead personal was welcoming and committing to guide and nurture the next generation of Scientists. I worked together with MIT undergraduates, MIT graduates up to the top rank of post doctoral fellows and highly accomplished visiting scientists. The cafeteria offers a wide range of food for lunch for a fair price and you always have additional opportunity to get some seafood at Legal Seafoods, which is close by.

Boston is a mecca for history junkies, the city has enough history to basically keep you sightseeing for weeks. The Old State house, Paul Revere house and the USS Constitution, which is the famous three-masted heavy frigate of the US Navy and the oldest commissioned naval vessel still afloat, is worth a visit. When it comes to seafood, Boston is supposed to have the best in the country, and a visit at little Italy and Chinatown is worthwhile as well. In order to get to know Boston, I recommend following the "Freedom Trail".

The standard of living in Boston and the surrounding areas are very high, but not as high as San Francisco, or New York. However, for such a small city, Boston is extraordinarily expensive. The most obvious a student should do is to look for a shared apartment. A big determining factor in renting is of course the location, especially if you need to live close to public transportation. It is worth living close to a metro station to get around, especially during winter, where snowstorms are quite common. If you are going to work at MIT, or Harvard I would recommend looking for a flat in the greater Boston area (Cambridge, Somerville or Allston) near the red line. It may look tempting to look for an apartment in Roxbury or near Roxbury, but that area should be avoided by any means, because of its high criminal rate. You can expect to pay between \$800 (Somerville) up to \$2000 (Cambridge) per month for a single room within a shared apartment depending on the area. Do not get a paper ticket for the T, you basically pay less if you ask for a reloadable free plastic Charlie Card at your nearest T-service personal. If you want to go out, it is worth to notice that bars close early as 2 a.m. and subways as well as rail service does not run between 12 to 5 a.m.