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# Field Report

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Practical Training Semester

WS 2019/2020



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Harvard Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology

HSCI iPS core facility

Strominger Lab

### **General impression of research stay abroad:**

Performing active research in another country with a non-native language spoken is an exciting challenge, brought me widely out of my comfort zone and I learned extremely much. The overall impression is excellent, however one difficulty I faced in practicing research there: high expectations with resulting extreme pressure. This most probably will happen to future fellows as well. But the good side is that it strengthened my trust in my abilities, gave answer to my question how much I can do in a certain period of time and it is always a great reward to look back on how much one was able to do, thereby it can have this beneficial effect for future fellows, too.

### **Harvard University**

To be part of a huge organization as Harvard University, with its wide interest in research that is carried out by more than 100 research centers around the world and supported by more than \$800 million of sponsored research funds each year is extraordinary, since most interesting research is performed and Harvard offers many social events, during which exchange and bonding between researchers takes place, essential for bringing up and discussing new ideas to grow as a society. It never becomes boring, everyday something happens.

### **Harvard Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology department (HSCRB)**

My lab is part of the Harvard Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology department (HSCRB) – iPS core facility, Cambridge, MA and deals with most recent questions in stem cell and regenerative biology that get transmitted to the whole department in form of several highly interesting seminars and science events. (I hope these seminars never stop; I love every single one of them!!). Most labs are highly sophisticated, well organized and equipped with structured, intelligent employees who are warmly working together to find answers to their deep questions. AND the free coffee next to the free pizza on Fridays to which the whole department comes together regularly should be praised here.

### **Strominger lab**

The Strominger lab is a relatively small group, comprised out of 5-6 researchers, including me at the moment. Due to that more work per time is required for the individual (during weekends, free celebration days like Christmas have to be sacrificed), since all exciting and important experiments need to proceed. Unfortunately, some equipment is obsolete but overall almost everything necessary is available. Finally, I feel very delighted that I could

experience being in this lab group with the suggestion for future fellows to choose a larger HSCRB lab to avoid extreme pressure.

### **People & acknowledgement:**

Jack Strominger, PI and Professor of Cancer Immunology and Biochemistry is an inspiring, 94 years old virologist, who entered Harvard in 1942. He regularly comes to the lab and was recently honored by the new, annual Strominger's lecture that will be dealing with important findings of immunology transparently presented by researchers all over the world, which will be held every year starting in 2020.

Lab members/associates: Tamara Tilburgs (official supervisor and PI in Ohio), Sarika Kshirsagar, Angela Crespo, Qin Li, Fang Wang, Celia Schneider and Torsten Meissner. Besides, I want to highlight my close interactions with the following labs I can highly recommend future fellows: Lee Lab, Whited lab and Fishman lab.

Additionally, I want to acknowledge people from the IMC UAS Krems with its medical and pharmaceutical biotechnology program director Prof.(FH) Priv.-Doz.Mag.Dr. Harald Hundsberger, our practical training semester coordinator Prof.(FH) Dr. Barbara Entler and my internal supervisor Prof.(FH) Mag. Dana Metzricky.

### **Recommendations for future fellows:**

Overall, I can highly recommend the HSCRB department, Harvard University and experiencing staying abroad to expand the horizon. Additionally, it can help you asking yourself (future fellows) beforehand; Why do you do what you do? What do you want? How do you want to archive it? (Where do you want to be?) To better estimate, which kind of education you need to reach your goals. Highlighting the importance to collect enough information before applying somewhere, since it is a serious commitment and works best for all, if it perfectly suits you. (!) Cambridge/Boston, MA, for example has icy wind and snow in the winter, its infrastructure/ transport is obsolete, many homeless people, Sea/Asian food is qualitative good but other especially healthy alternative kitchens are ether very pricy (as almost everything there) or not available but all in all it is a great hotspot for highly intelligent, creative minds, since many well-known universities like MIT or Berklee or known research institutes are set up there and bring education to the next level.

Finally, you can note that it was one of the best experiences in my life, that I hope programs like this exist for a while and that I want to encourage everyone who wants to use the chance to be of value for the community and nature to do so!