

Laurin Lux

Institution Abroad: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Beckman Institute

- General impression of the research stay abroad

Taken all together I had a great time in the USA and would be eager to take such a chance again. My stay gave me a number of insights that were impossible to make back at my home university in Vienna. I would not argue that every moment of my research stay was ideal. Working in this new environment was challenging on both a personal and professional level, but the rewards outweigh the challenges easily.

- Quality of the host institution

The equipment of my research group at the Beckman Institute was excellent and most certainly there is no other group in the world that has a comparable diversity of instruments for infrared-spectroscopic imaging. This broad availability of instruments allows to conduct experiments that are hard to perform at most other places around the world. Beyond the instruments that are solely used by the Bhargava group there is also a large variety of shared imaging instruments in the Beckman Institute and the associated faculties.

- Contacts within the host institution, inclusion in the organization

There is a broad spectrum of international researchers present in the Beckman Institute. Due to the declared interdisciplinarity of the research activities there are also experts from numerous fields such as mechanical,

Innerhalb des Beckman Institutes, an dem ich geforscht habe, gibt es ein breites Spektrum an Forschungsgruppen, die sich mit interdisziplinären Fragestellungen auseinandersetzen. Es lohnt sich in jedem Fall über den Tellerrand der eigenen Forschungsgruppe hinaus zu blicken und auch mit anderen ForscherInnen im Gebäude zu reden. Das Beckman Institute ist nicht nur fachlich, sondern auch kulturell äußerst divers. Als Österreicher/Europäer ist diese Atmosphäre eine Bereicherung für den eigenen Horizont.

Bezüglich der fachlichen Arbeit wird sehr viel Wert auf Eigeninitiative gesetzt und es ist notwendig die Kontakte zu anderen Gruppen (z.B. um andere Instrumente zu benutzen oder Proben zu bekommen) selbständig zu knüpfen.

- Organisation/Study Site

To travel from Austria to Champaign I would recommend flying to Chicago taking either the Bus or the Train from there to Champaign. For all the occasions when you travel with a lot of baggage, I would recommend taking the bus, because it is directly departing from the airport. To take the train one must travel to the city center which with the Metro. In general, the train is very comfortable and faster than the bus. I would highly recommend taking the train for all the occasions when you just want to visit Chicago for a weekend.

Champaign-Urbana is the combination of two directly neighboring with a combined population of ~ 100k. The center of the city is the campus that hosts ~50k undergraduate and graduate students. As it is typical for most US cities, the infrastructure is designed for the usage of cars. Nevertheless, it is possible to do without a car. There is a reasonable bus system free to use for all students and all the necessary purchase can be done at one of the stores that are close to campus town. I would recommend using a bicycle when the weather allows it, this is one of the best means to get around in campus town. For any day trips it is possible to rent a car from a company associated to the university or one of the other car rental companies.

- Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows

Studying for a semester abroad is in any case an enriching experience. To get the most out of the stay abroad I would highly recommend doing extensive research about your host institution and your future research group. A deeper insight into the culture of your research group can be obtained by talking to other PhD students in the lab or by joining a group meeting.