



# UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

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## SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

### FIELD REPORT FOR THE MARSHALL PLAN FOUNDATION

*By: Lucija Pintaric*

To acquire my master's diploma at the FH Campus Wien, I have completed 11 months of scientific research at the University of California San Diego, department of pharmacology and neurosciences. I was accepted to be a part of the Daneman laboratory team which aims to provide better understanding of the blood-brain-barrier in health and during various pathologies. My time spend in San Diego has been one of the most valuable, educational and rewarding experience of my life. After completing my research stay aboard, I have come to realize how incredibly lucky I am to end up in SD in a lab with such incredible people - from my mentor, PI, lab colleagues to general lab staff.

Firstly, San Diego is a 'dream come true' to live in. It is sunny year-round, people are very kind, friendly and have such a positive vibe. Even though 2020 was characterized by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, San Diego had so much to offer during my stay. My personal favorite was the incredible scenery, nature hikes and cliff ocean views. Picturesque beaches span on cliff sides for as long as you can see, and the Pacific Ocean waves give you the opportunity to ride them throughout the whole year. My days were spent exploring the cliffs, going to national parks, hiking mountains, snorkeling with leopard sharks and exploring Balboa Park and its many exhibits. First 4 months I got emotional every time we passed a row of palm trees as it would remind me of all the movies I've seen since I was a child. It didn't matter how long or hard I had to work because I knew that when I left the lab, I could do a yoga routine overlooking the ocean during a sunset. I could write a whole paper expressing why I completely fell in love with San Diego, but the point I want to emphasize is that no matter your lifestyle or interests, SD will provide you with the opportunity to thrive.

Secondly, the Daneman lab has exceeded all of my expectations. The PI of the lab, dr. Richard Daneman has a goal to conduct groundbreaking and ethical research while at the same time foster a very enjoyable and fun atmosphere. I find his kind and generous character remarkable and rare in the scientific community. Dr. Daneman has supported me every step of the way – ranging from financial and emotional support to even standing up to UCSD in a rather uncomfortable personal medical insurance situation that has occurred. When we found out about the pandemic, he has agreed to let me stay as long as I needed to complete my project and also financially compensate me for those months since I had no more

additional funds. During the stay-at-home orders, he and my mentor gave me the opportunity to attend lectures, seminars, courses and even write part of a review paper which will be published in Nature Reviews Neuroscience. Furthermore, every team member of the lab has been at my disposal if I needed advice, training or a friend during hard and good times. The environment was nothing if not inclusive and supportive.

Lastly, University of California has a very high quality of professors, scientists, and numerous medical and research cores and facilities. I was personally very pleased with how ethically the animal research has been conducted. My project involved working with mice and I felt very comfortable with all the rules, regulations and institutions which verified that every step of the procedure was performed with no excessive or unnecessary harm/pain to the animal. Even though we would like to believe that science is conducted ethically in all labs across the globe, we can acknowledge that not all institutions adhere to such rigorous regulations. Furthermore, in the last year I have learned a plethora of techniques, statistics, laboratory practices and use of various software programs such as Image J and Adobe Photoshop. I will use the knowledge I gained in the last year throughout my whole scientific career. I could not be happier to have chosen the Daneman lab at UCSD to complete my master thesis project. To the future Marshall Plan students and fellows, I highly recommend San Diego as a place to choose your research project as well as UCSD as an institution of choice. To further validate my report, I plan on going back to San Diego to work as a researcher full time.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any additional questions and/or concerns.

Sincerely,  
Lucija Pintaric

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucija Pintaric". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial 'L'.