

Report of my experience working in a research facility in the U.S.A. (June 2015 - Feb. 2016)

To perform my master thesis at one of the leading institutes in the field of immunology in the United States was a defining experience, which I will always be grateful for.

A notable difference to research in Austria was definitely the amount of funding: Even though I was in a laboratory with more than 20 people, everybody used state-of-the-art methods and all their projects were on high-impact topics. Additionally, Yale University offers a broad spectrum of different talks, which I really enjoyed as it allowed me to expand my knowledge on current topics in immunology: We had a weekly research in progress seminar, a biweekly immunology seminar with well known researchers from all over the world and from time to time special symposiums or retreats, which proved to be great networking opportunities.

The principle investigators in the department of immunology are all internationally recognized and their researchers are some of the best in the field, which is why talking with them was really inspiring. Even though most of my colleagues were already doing their post-doctoral research, I've always felt welcome and was treated as an equal. I worked a lot during my stay abroad, most of the times at least 50h/week, but the fascinating research topics and the amazing atmosphere in the laboratory made it seem as way less.

New Haven itself is a bigger town with a rather small city center: The university is definitely the main attraction and owns most of the buildings in the center (including museums, a theater, libraries, a huge fitness center and multiple sport stadiums). Sadly, New Haven has a rather noticeable social division and some parts of the city are not safe. Therefore, Yale University has its own police, which will inform you if a student or faculty member was a victim of robbery or assault. Luckily, during my stay there, I have never felt at risk and nothing like this happened to me as I avoided the unsafe districts as well as walking home late at night by myself. The university has its own public transportation, which is for free and even allows you to call private shuttles after 6pm for door-to-door service, which makes it easy to get home safely. Yale University has an office of international students & scholars (OISS), which can help you with important questions covering the visa for your stay abroad as well as

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mobile phone contracts. They give you a short introduction to life in New Haven at the beginning of your stay and also organize different events and one-day-trips where you can meet other international students.

I would definitely recommend everybody, who has the chance to work at a university in the United States, to take it. I improved my English, I learned many new laboratorial skills, got more confident with presenting my data in another language in front of bigger groups and had amazing networking opportunities where I befriended a lot of researchers in my field of study, who I am looking forward to meeting at conferences some day again.

For future Marshall Plan scholars, you should first off know that the living expenses (rent, groceries etc.) in the United States are pretty high. I can recommend craigslist for searching for a shared apartment or e.g. buying a bicycle. For my mobile phone, I used an only online available plan from T-Mobile, which had the best price-performance ratio including unlimited web (<http://prepaid-phones.t-mobile.com/other-prepaid-plans>) and which you can quit every month. As a student you have the opportunity to test amazon prime a month for free, which I used for buying my SIM card, a fan, towels and so on. Additionally, I can really recommend the apps Uber, as an easy way to get to different places, and Meetup, for meeting new people who share the same interests.

A for New Haven specific recommendation when searching for an apartment would be to choose your location depending on the Yale Shuttle system (webpage: <http://to.yale.edu/shuttle>; app: transloc rider): First, it indicates where most of the Yale-affiliated people live (therefore, it's most likely a secure area) and second, it will save you a lot of time if you have a direct connection to your laboratory. If you do not have a car, www.peapod.com is the easiest way to do your grocery shopping in New Haven. Also, there is a direct and cheap train connection to New York City, which you should definitely take advantage of. Otherwise, Greyhound is a cheap way to explore other cities like Boston.