

Field Report

My general impression is that the United States are more different from Europe than you would initially think. Of course everyone knows that Americans differ in many of their attitudes from Europeans and I also knew already that they have a very different approach towards government and generally put a stronger emphasis on individualism and at the same time are also said to be more embracing of diversity. But although being aware of all these differences I still needed some time to adapt, especially to the overly friendliness and the readiness to small-talk with complete strangers, albeit most of these encounters can be regarded as being rather superficial. But after adapting to all of this I really enjoyed my stay abroad and would encourage everyone who gets the chance to do the same. That all being said I am currently a little bit worried how the US might change under a Trump presidency and his election came as a great shock to all Americans I personally got to know, revealing again how divided this nation is between its very liberal coastal areas and the more rural parts in the South and Midwest.

The quality of my host institution was fantastic in terms of resources available. Rockefeller University is a place where scientific research is conducted at a level that is remarkable and I really enjoyed being part of this scientific community and felt very grateful for having gotten the opportunity to be trained at such a great place.

As a student you are of course also dependent to some degree on your supervisor. The two supervisors I had during my year at this university were both great teachers and mentors and shared their knowledge with me readily and also gave me the nice feeling of taking me seriously. I also got to know another visiting student who had a lot of problems with his supervisor and didn't get along with him on a personal basis, so everyone should be aware that that can happen but in the end the issues could be resolved by assigning a new supervisor to this student.

Regarding contacts within the host organization I was lucky to not be the only foreign visiting student in the lab so I had people that kind of took care of me from the start on and made the adaptation process much easier. With time I got to know more and more people and especially at the end of my stay I had made some really good friends from all over the world, who I am missing now a lot.

I was also allowed to attend Symposiums and Seminars that took place at the University where I could see some of the greatest scientist giving talks. So overall I felt very included. I would recommend future Marshall Plan students to first of all not be shy when it comes to contact potential host laboratories. A lot of labs in the US are very open when it comes to foreign students joining their lab for a limiting period of time. I would also encourage everyone to make the most out of the stay by also taking trips and getting to know the country beyond your host organization and beyond educational purposes. The US has a lot to offer and I believe nobody will regret making this experience.