

MPS Personal Account

Overall impression of the research period

Overall, I was happy with my research period in Kuchl and felt like I gained a lot of good hands-on experience and information that wouldn't been possible if it wasn't for the research I did. However, there was definitely some problems and obstacles that needed to be overcome. For example, starting out in July wasn't the best choice, since the University of Salzburg isn't too active during the summer months - and even on to September when it is considered Europe's "holiday." I should have waited to start my period of stay in the Fall when more students, staff and projects were going on, specifically in the labs. Another problem I had was being dependant on other companies for testing materials and this caused some major issues and delays during my research period. Fortunately, they were eventually solved. Once things settled down, I was able to take classes at the school, help other students with their research projects, complete my research project, visit companies and corporations related to my study. I made numerous new friends and learned much about the culture of Austria. These things allowed me to gain valuable hands-on experience in a research environment, dealing with not only wood products, but skiing - which is a passion of mine!

Quality of the research institution

FHZ Salzburg Kuchl was a high level wood technical school that I enjoyed attending very much. The staff was wonderful, especially Dr. Barbu, Dr. Petutschnigg, and Thomas Wimmer who were both very helpful throughout my stay in Kuchl and key to the success of my research project. The facilities were well-equipped with everything you could possibly need for testing wood products. And, if for some reason they didn't have something they always tried to solve the problem. The campus of FHZ Salzburg Kuchl is incredible with some of the best views I have ever seen. Students at the university are friendly and very helpful if you asked for help or guidance.

Integration in the research institution/organization

Dr. Barbu and the students made it easy to join the student body at FHZ Salzburg Kuchl. I was always told about events and opportunities to see new things and meet new people. For example, laser tag, skiing, and fundraising events. They made me feel right at home from the first day I arrived all the way until the day I left which made it very difficult to leave Kuchl. I enjoyed almost everyday there due to the friendliness of the student body and the helpfulness of the staff. I hope to return someday soon.

Recommendations for future MPS scholars

- The more proficient in your area of research, the better. Although help is there, you don't always know where to get it. And, the language barrier can slow things down.

- Don't be dependant on a company or someone else for materials needed for your project. Because I relied on a Portland based ski manufacturer for samples, it changed my timeline.
- Always ask for help if needed. The local residents were an amazing resource and very accomodating in my living situation.
- The best time to go is September through late July, a typical school year.
- Living in Kuchl is better than in Salzburg. It is a small mountain town and easier to meet people. I loved cycling around it. The public transportation to Salzburg isn't a problem.
- Try and make friends with as many of the Austrians and Germans as possible to get the local experience. That said, I skied many time, played numerous ping pong matches and was visited by a former roommate from Switzerland.
- Your experience will go by faster than you expect. Don't put things off thinking there will be more time because it will impact the end of your stay.
- Try to make as much of a weekly schedule as possible to help manage your time, and keep a log of all the hours your worked.
- Keep a journal of your experiences so you can have them for the future to help you remember what you did and what you saw.
- Don't buy everything you need for living before speaking to the other students because they often have tons of extra kitchen supplies, bathroom supplies, etc.
- The best option for housing is trying to find a student who is gone for the same period you are staying and you take their place. That way you don't need to purchase anything and you can have a roommate who is a local.

I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to the members of the Marshall Plan scholarship committee. Due to this scholarship I had an amazing experience where I was able to meeting lots of great new people, do testing in a subject area that I am extremely interested in, and gained perspective to how university in another country operates. I greatly encourage anyone who is seeking an adventure and wants to learn while doing it to apply for this scholarship. I would also like to thanks FHZ Salzburg- Kuchl for everything they did for me while I was living abroad in Austria. Being that far away from home for over a year was a scary thought for me at first but the staff and students at the university made the transition easy and I felt like I belonged there from the beginning.