

Arpad Bakonyi

Marshall Plan Scholar, Industrial Engineering

Home University: University of Applied Sciences, Austria

Host University: City College of New York, USA

Field report

It was one of my best decisions of my life to apply for this scholarship. Although my graduation process at my home institution (University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien) elongated due to my visit abroad, and I had to work on a more complex research for my Master's Thesis than at home, the experience I gathered during my stay is beyond compare and will very much come of use. First, experiencing a different working atmosphere and new methodologies was very useful; it contributes to a more sophisticated and elaborated working attitude. Besides, the general social atmosphere had a positive influence on my behavior as well, which adds up to an important international experience, not mentioning the advancement of my language skills. Of course it also depends on you, how you use this opportunity to develop yourself and establish future connections. Generally, it is very hard to establish and maintain contacts in NYC, due to the high complexity of the city life which negatively impacts free time. I could make few contacts within the University, but became very good friends with some of my teammates of a hobby sports team I participated in. All in all, this visit has been a significant contribution my career and a remarkable influence to my life. Therefore, I am grateful to the Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation and to UAS Technikum, for making my research stay possible.

The City College of New York (CCNY) is part of the City University of New York (CUNY), which is the largest university system in the USA. CCNY is the oldest and most renowned college within the system, with a long tradition of openness, and high acceptance rates towards minorities. This philosophy of the institution holds up to day, concerning it is a public university, with very high diversity and relatively low tuition and fees. Along with that, the institution is able to hold its education on a high level. Important researches are taking place in the labors, students regularly finish on the top 5 places of students' competitions and conferences with their projects, especially in the field of engineering. Although the facilities are not all fitted with the latest equipment and some are in need for renovation, sufficient equipment with modern technologies is available in most labor rooms and offices to be able to conduct high level scientific work. The professors at this university are well experienced leaders of important scientific projects. Additionally, the working atmosphere can be generally described as humane, open-minded and easy-going, while not losing professionalism.

The relationship of the Professors with their students and PhDs is respectful and somewhat personal, where every opinion or input is not only listened to, but also taken into consideration, which is a positive experience.

I was very much welcomed at the University, and supported in every respect from the first day of my stay. My Professor was an excellent host, and his door was always open for me to stop by. Administrative load is fairly high for an international visitor in the US, but every issue was intended to be resolved with the least inconvenience. I was included in a small project group led by the Professor. The atmosphere was positive thinking, supportive. The other Professors and supervisors were all easy-going, as well as the other international students, PhDs, and visitors with whom I worked together during my stay, in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

For someone who intends to visit this institution, I recommend to be open to a different, more individual type of thinking, and higher individual workloads. You should be able to work alone and figure things out for yourself. The Professors and the team are very friendly and helpful, but they will not solve problems instead of you, they will not directly provide you with facts or instructions for your work. Instead there is an environment of working things out together and a lot of trying from each side. Do not be afraid to fail. If you do fail, it does not matter, hard work is appreciated. It is important to mention that in New York City the costs of living are particularly high. It is economically advantageous to rent an apartment close to CCNY, because the Campus is situated in Harlem, which is a relatively cheaper neighborhood. However, the quality of life and the atmosphere of living in that neighborhood can be possibly challenging, particularly for a Central-European. Other areas of NYC offer a better living; nevertheless, the costs of living in those areas are remarkably higher, as well as the commute to the University from those distances is excessively time-consuming.