

MARSHALL PLAN SCHOLARSHIP – EXPERIENCE

Lea Alexandra Brandner

Title of Research Project: Alkyne Activation on Bio-inspired Tungsten-Complexes

Supervisor at the University of Graz (NAWI Graz): Prof. Dr. Nadia C. Mösch-Zanetti

Supervisor at the University of New Mexico: Prof. Dr. Martin L. Kirk

Research period: 28.02.2018 – 31.08.2018 (6 months)

General impressions of my research stay abroad:

Studying in the USA was a truly memorable experience. My supervisor was very open to new ideas and supportive throughout all of my research stay, helping me expand my knowledge in chemistry. Outside of my work at UNM, I sometimes found it a little hard to adjust to the new environment. The climate in New Mexico is very different to Central Europe and public transport is not as well-developed as in Austria. Since cities in the Midwest and on the West Coast are extremely widespread, it is rather difficult to go anywhere without a car. Another aspect of life I struggled with in the beginning was food. Packaged goods contain significantly more sugar and fat than what I was used to and organic products are a lot more expensive than in Austria. Nevertheless, a rather healthy diet can be kept if you make an effort to explore all corners of the extremely large department stores.

Apart from my work at UNM, I probably enjoyed travelling the most. I was particularly stunned by the beautiful national parks in and surrounding New Mexico and would have liked to spend more time exploring these places.

Quality of the host institution:

The University of New Mexico is fully equipped for research and recreational purposes. The department of chemistry offers the usual facilities required for synthetic work as well as special equipment depending on the type of research. Access to a library and a computing center can be easily obtained if necessary. An in-house supply center provides common chemicals, glassware as well as other laboratory equipment and orders new laboratory supplies on request. The Student Union Building offers a large food court and essential services, such as ATMs. Student tickets for sports events or theater performances as well as University apparel and supplies can be acquired

at the UNM bookstore. On campus recreational facilities, a student health center and a Police Department were also within walking distance.

Contacts with the host institution, inclusion in the organization:

The Global Education Office (GEO) at the University of New Mexico is responsible for all international students and administers various aspects of the research stay, such as Visa application forms, insurance requirements or financing. They were very helpful in the Visa application process and provided important information on University life on and off campus at the beginning of my research stay. They also offered Getaway trips and workshops for international students on a regular basis. Nonetheless, work-related aspects were coordinated almost exclusively with my advisor at UNM and his research group.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows:

After a successful application, you should get in touch with the host university as soon as possible. Organizations, such as the GEO, will help you with the Visa application process and send you the required documents. Approximately two months should be scheduled for this process prior to your departure. Residence on campus is not always available, especially if your research stay continues on during summer break. Thus, off-campus alternatives should be considered. Some hosts from Airbnb.com offer rooms for several months. I found my room on craigslist.org. Using this website, you should make sure that the advertisement is respectable and organize a video-call with the landlord in advance to any form of agreement. It is also recommended to make inquiries, which neighborhoods to avoid, or look up crime rates for certain areas of the city.

Student tickets for sport events and theatre performances are usually very cheap or free and a good opportunity to connect with people. Information on these kinds of recreational activities is usually attainable online or at community places, such as the Student Union Building. Nevertheless, it can be hard to connect with co-workers. It is therefore recommendable to get in touch with other international students who might organize getaways with you.

If you have the possibility to travel in advance or after your research stay, you should take the opportunity to visit the thousands of interesting around the US.