

Field report

General impression of the research stay abroad

Innovation and research run at a fast pace in Boston and strong minds build the foundation. It is one of the world's capitals of concentrated knowledge and that can be experienced at every corner. Diverse fields of research collide and create new things on a daily base. The research community is both free enough to tackle big, and sometimes maybe even absurd, questions and rigorous enough to convert these questions into important and impactful scientific results. To experience this was impressive and I felt honored to be able to form part of it. I never learned so many different aspects of science in such a short time, from technique and communication to the social and managerial structures that form a research laboratory. This propelled my scientific development further than I imagined.

Quality of the host institution

The wealth of knowledge is astonishing and the researchers, scientists, engineers and other professionals are highly skilled and trained. This creates an excellent working environment that nourishes growth and development. The infrastructure is spread over the entire Boston area allowing networks to form easily. There is always a specialist around when needed. The faculties are reachable by public transport and strategically well located. The proximity of MGH and Harvard Medical School allows for a close connection between applied health care and foundational research. This enables a symbiosis that rapidly advances patient care and treatment.

Additionally, administrative services and social hubs are always within reach. Community engagement and social activities are present throughout all structures of the institution. There is high individual commitment and a sense for individual responsibility to guarantee high overall quality in all aspects that from this institution.

Contacts within the host institution, inclusion in the organization

It is easy to get into contact with colleagues and superiors. A regularly held "bio-meeting" gave insight into different research topics. Guest speakers from other departments and institutions were invited and the informal setting allowed for open discussions and exchange of knowledge. If necessary, I could easily connect with specialists within the institution and ask for their advice. The amount of local and international professionals that I got to interact with on a daily base is mind-blowing and I am deeply appreciative of that. I was adopted into the scientific community and I now feel very much a part of it. The contacts will remain after my stay abroad and I am positive that the newly build network is a fruitful one.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows

Go to talks, exhibitions and seminars and absorb some of the knowledge that resides within your host organization. It is also a good way to meet people and find new friends. Go to lab meetings and use opportunities to listen to guest speakers. Connect with Austrian academic organizations like ASciNA and share experiences with peers. Engage in other communities such as the Association for Women in Science and find mentors and friends.

Look for shared flats with locals so you can more easily dive into the American culture and the American way of life. Spend your weekends traveling the US - the nature is incredible and the national parks are breathtaking.