

Field Report – Marshall Plan Scholarship

Host University: Montanuniversitaet Leoben, Austria

Home University: University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

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General Impressions:

As a third year PhD student in the Materials (Materials Science) Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), the opportunity to spend several months abroad to conduct research in Austria was unparalleled. This opportunity would not have been possible without financial support from the Marshall Plan Scholarship. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity.

While I have traveled abroad in the past, I have never spent significant time in Austria. I visited Leoben in the summer of 2017 for a conference, and knew that it was a small, quaint town, with a large concentration of great scientists and metallurgists. This point is not to be understated, and is something that I garnered further appreciation for during my stay: I do not believe that anywhere else in the world has the same concentration of intelligent, kind, and driven materials scientists.

As I am sure is common in these reports, I would like to encourage whoever is reading this to travel, to live abroad, and to expand your horizons. It was an unparalleled experience for me, and I would highly encourage others to do the same.

Host Institution:

Montanuniversitaet Leoben is an institution with a rich history of materials science, metallurgy, and other technical disciplines. Leoben itself is a small mountain town in the south eastern state of Styria at the tail end of the Alps. Located 45 minutes by train from Graz, and 2 hours by train from Vienna, Leoben is accessible but remote. It is a perfect, quiet spot for a stay abroad. Leoben itself has a long history of mining and metallurgy, which is why it is such a hub for materials scientists. A short drive from the city center, you can find the Voestalpine plant, where they extrude extremely long (>1 km) railway tracks in one continuous piece.

While my stay was over the summer, and many of the students were gone, the university is small and close knit. Everyone in the international office (MIRO) was great – they were extremely communicative before my stay to help with things like finding an apartment and during my stay they helped with getting acclimated to Leoben, helping me get a bank account, etc. I'd like to thank Karina Michelini Rodriguez for all her help and patience – she is amazing and was

invaluable in getting situated in Leoben. The students and researchers I worked with in the Materials Physics department were incredibly welcoming and friendly.

I lived at Milestone apartments, which is a 10 minute walk from Montanuniversitaet Leoben. There are many student accomodations in Leoben, many of which have been recently built. Coming from southern California, my rent seemed incredibly reasonable. I stayed in a studio-type apartment for 315 Euro per month. This was fully furnished and included utilities. There were many perks of this apartment building, such as a nice rooftop terrace with a communal grill, a small gym, lots of communal space including a ping-pong table and other amenities.

The host institution was great, and I especially need to thank Assoc. Professor Daniel Kiener for his guidance and hospitality during my stay. Even as a new father he was always willing to chat about research and life. Discussions with his students and others in the department and the Eric Schmid Institute (ESI) were extremely helpful and interesting. As normally happens during research, I left Leoben with more questions than when I arrived.

Recommendations for future MPS Fellows:

My recommendations are brief: take any opportunity to travel and experience new things that you can. While it may seem difficult or unnecessary, you will grow tremendously as a person, as well as in your field. Learning a new language, living in a new place, experiencing new cultures are incredible experiences, and can only broaden your understanding of yourself and the world. I was lucky to have gotten this opportunity, and am extremely grateful for it.