

Field Report by Nathalie Gruber

FH Campus Wien

Scholar at Harvard Medical University in Boston from July 23, 2018- December 17, 2018

Impression of research stay abroad

In general, my stay in Boston, United States of America, was a fantastic experience from a professional and personal perspective.

From a professional point of view, I have been glad to get the opportunity to work and do research for one of the best and most renowned universities in the world, the Harvard University. Harvard Medical School is the home of some of the leading research labs in the world and is able to publish cutting-edge papers continuously. This is the reason that sufficient funds grant state of the art technology and laboratories. I got the impression, that at Harvard and at the Wyss Institute, there was the honest endeavor to minimize all unnecessary bureaucratic overhead as possible to enable researchers to concentrate 100% on what they should do best, work on their research and advance humanity. Moreover, collaboration is not just a buzzword in research, it is a scientist's daily bread and there is hardly any place where this is taken as literally as in America.

From a personal point of view, it was definitely an experience I don't want to miss. Harvard is also known for its diversity of people and I did definitely experience that. It was wonderful to meet many Master students, PhD students, Principal Investigators from totally different scientific backgrounds, different cultural background, all coming together at one place to develop something great. Besides working, we did a lot of other activities to get to know each other. The laboratory had a lot of events and I managed to also meet people outside the laboratory for example due to me joining the Harvard choir and a dancing group. I did find some really good friends in Boston with whom I am still in contact and I am sure, I will meet again.

Quality of the host institution

Harvard is clearly top-notch in respect of its quality of institution. I come to this conclusion by rating its technical components, the quality of people working there and the output in terms of paper they create. The machines and all sorts of technical components are state of the art. There are no machines you could use elsewhere to be faster or to get a better result for your tests. Applicants do usually have a rigorous acceptance processes and paired with the world's greatest talents applying, Harvard and America can clearly choose among the brightest most motivated people available. The

quantity and more important the quality of output America, especially Harvard and the Wyss Institute produce is enormous. It is hard to find any institution which will have a better “paper published to principal investigator”- ratio than Harvard University. All in all, of superb quality.

Contacts within the host institution, inclusion in the organization

Getting started the first days at Harvard was made really easy by its competent staff at the international office. Everything was already prepared upon arrival and I was able to get access to basically every institution, I had to go to immediately.

Within the different research groups there where a lot of professional and private activities where staff did right away encourage me to take part. It was easy to get to know people around the laboratory and find a quick way to engage within the Harvard or Wyss Institute community. If there were any question about the lab arising, a lab manager responsible for all processes within the lab was every time within reach to make your stay and research as easy as possible. Private activities were very inclusive and a great opportunity to feel quickly comfortable in a totally new environment.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows

I can wholeheartedly encourage Marshall Plan students to take the chance and go abroad into the USA. It is a wonderful, safe and vibrant place where it is possible to chase the dream you are going for since you started to study.

Three important steps:

1. Take time to choose the right place and laboratory As, diverse as the country itself, America has a lot of places and different research to offer. Do your research and find the best fit for you.
2. Say yes: take opportunities to meet people and get to know the country and culture. It is really worth it.
3. Take time to rest. Everybody is fully energized when they go on exchange and do work as hard as possible. Even though there are lots of good memories from them, do not forget to sometimes take a rest and a day off, to fully embrace the luck you have to be here and work on your skills.