

## Harvard Stem Cell Institute – Harvard University, Cambridge

I conducted my Master's thesis in the Harvard Stem Cell Institute under the supervision of Dr. Torsten Meissner. The Harvard Stem Cell Institute is a well-established facility within the Harvard University with state-of-the-art equipment and well-respected scientists. I had the rare opportunity to not only work within one lab but three. I originally sent my application to Dr. Chad Cowan and he accepted me into his lab for my Master's Thesis. Different circumstances led to the relocation of his lab from the Harvard Stem Cell Institute to the Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital. Only Torsten and a few others stayed behind to finish a project, which is the reason why I also stayed in the Harvard Stem Cell Institute for my Master's thesis. From the beginning, I had two projects to work on and a third was included (my Master's thesis topic) after meeting and being introduced to Dr. Douglas Melton. It was also in his lab that I worked and spent most my time in. Because all the scientists are well-connected within the Harvard University, I could spend my time in three different labs and learn as much as I did. The Harvard Stem Cell Institute also presents the opportunity to learn more about other topics through weekly seminars and guest talks from scientists all around the world. So, I got the opportunity to for example listen to a seminar series from Dr. Jennifer Doudna and her role in establishing the CRISPR/Cas technology.

For me going to the US for my Master's thesis did not mean to go abroad to enjoy easy 8 months but to work hard and learn a lot of different things. I was aware beforehand that working on the weekends would be a regular thing. Working hours between 10-12 hours/day were not uncommon. But working was never dull. Every day, I got the chance to learn something new and meet new interesting people. The Harvard Stem Cell Institute, in cooperation with other Institutes, offer a variety of activities for their employees. There are two weekly get-togethers (Beer-hour) and occasionally other things such as free pizza for lunch or ice cream. Also, the labs themselves arrange various outings like kayaking or skiing.

Although I worked a lot during my stay, I also had the opportunity to experience other things too. Meeting new people and making friends to spend your time with is easy in Boston. There a lot of people there just staying for a few months looking for companionship. In general, Boston is a very European city. Many people living there are students from foreign countries. Also, Boston is a very expensive city! For future applicants going to Boston, they should be aware that they need a certain amount of money every month (2500-3000 \$) for basic expenses like a room and food. Except from that Boston is a very comfortable city to live in!

For future students planning to go to the US, I can only recommend going to the Harvard Stem Cell Institute. The working hours are long, but you will learn a lot. You also have the freedom to develop your own project and how to advance with it.