

Field Report

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General impressions

The general impression of my research stay is clearly very positive. I did not only gain new knowledge and skills, but I also got to know a new culture and many new people. Furthermore, it has been very interesting and instructive for me to work and research at such a prestigious research institution as the Center for Systems Biology (CSB) at the Massachusetts General Hospital / Harvard Medical School.

Quality of the host institution

As expected, the infrastructure of the research facility is very good there. As the research group of PhD Miles Miller is focused on cell biology and microscopy, the equipment was very good in terms of safety cabinets for working with human cells and high-resolution microscopes (confocal microscopes). Nevertheless, I must also note that the equipment in the chemistry laboratory is not necessarily better than that in the chemical laboratories at the Vienna University of Technology (the main reason for this, of course, is the already mentioned different research focus at the CSB). For my research, this did not matter that much, since during my research stay, I was mainly dealing with cell experiments and imaging experiments and therefore profited greatly from the excellent infrastructure in this field. On the other hand, it showed me how good the infrastructure and resources are at my home institute, the Institute of Applied Synthetic Chemistry.

Contacts within the host institution

The group of my supervisor Miles Miller consisted of five people including me. Two group members were biologists, one member was a radiologist, a computer scientist and a chemist completed his group. Because of the high degree of interdisciplinarity, I learnt new ways to solve a scientific problem. Due to the daily lunch together, the group retreat at the beginning of my stay and a jointly visit of a basketball game, the integration in the research group was very good. We had a very good working atmosphere, characterized by mutual respect and helpfulness.

Boston is a very nice place to live and study and the live quality is very high compared to other American cities. Boston is often called the most European city among US cities and I can just confirm that. I would also like to emphasize the warmth and openness with which Americans meet strangers and new people. A drawback are the extremely high rental and living costs that you have to pay in Boston. This stay in Boston would not have been possible for me, without the Marshall Scholarship. So, I would like to reiterate the importance of such scholarships and I hope that many of my colleagues will also be able to benefit from this scholarship in the future.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows

The most important recommendation: plan enough time. For planning of the stay abroad (VISA, flat, etc), as well as for the duration of the stay abroad itself. If you travel to the US for a longer time, you should plan enough time for sightseeing as well. It is better to do this either before starting your research stay or afterwards. Hence, people should plan enough time for their stay abroad.