

Field Report

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General impression of my research stay abroad

I was very pleased with my overall stay in Massachusetts working in the iPS Core of the Harvard Stem Cell Institute (HSCI) in Cambridge. As expected, research generally has its ups and downs. Some weeks were very busy and I got very promising results whereas other weeks delivered less motivating data. Nonetheless, the project turned out to be very successful and I really enjoyed working on it. I learned so much and developed a strong passion for research in the field of regenerative medicine.

Quality of the host institution

The environment was very prosperous in terms of networking and upskilling. The HSCI provides a unique interactive surrounding, where I found it easy to acquire new skills and collect new ideas for my project. Every method that was required for my research and every necessary instrument were easily accessible and instructions were provided. For data analysis and experiment planning, I could ask for any type of software and for its installation was taken care of immediately. The laboratory was very well organized and clean. We had lab cleaning on a regular basis and a very good tracking structure in order to find reagents and samples instantly. Moreover, international students are well taken care of and I always knew whom to contact in case of any questions.

Contacts within the host institution, inclusion in the organization

Within the lab, I had the pleasure of working with a very international team. Everyone was helpful and supportive and had a great personality. The working environment was really exceptional and I enjoyed being there and interact with my colleagues. My supervisor, Laurence Daheron, PhD, is a fantastic teacher and very patient instructor. She trusted me enough to let me plan my experiments independently but also found enough time to revise everything and give me advice.

Within the organization I had the chance to attend seminars, where recent research progress, background information and data were presented. I found these seminars

very educative and helpful. Next to that, the institute organized beer hours on a regular basis, which I found were a good opportunity to interact with other researchers and visiting scholars.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows

Overall, I can totally recommend joining the Harvard iPS Core for a research semester, provided you are interested in stem cell research. You should be willing to work independently and seek for a challenge. Such a project can be a very difficult task and one should be aware of the workload such research is demanding. Nonetheless, I would do it all over and do not regret any second that I have spent within the walls of the HSCI. Moreover, I would certainly recommend attending the organized seminars. The research that is done in the institute is stunning. If you are able to join the after-work beer hours, then do so. This is a good opportunity to make friends, which you will be happy to have so far away from home.