

Master's thesis at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai through the Marshall Plan Scholarship

General impression of my research stay abroad:

My name is Lucas Scholl and I am currently a master's student at the University of Vienna in Austria. In the last year of my master's program in molecular biology with specification in molecular medicine, I went abroad to the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York to conduct the practical part of my master's thesis. This complex research experience was only possible through the renowned Marshall Plan Scholarship, which I was awarded in May 2017. My general impression of my academic year in the U.S. was very good and I did not regret my decision at all. Through my research stay abroad, my young scientific carrier was immensely pushed, and I gained a lot of vulnerable experiences. Furthermore, it contributed majorly to my new and stronger personality. I learned to grow on problems I faced, and I enjoyed the challenge to overcome my initial doubts.

Quality of the host institution:

As a visiting student, I worked in the world-famous laboratory of Prof. Dr. Peter Palese, which is part of the microbiology department at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Prof. Dr. Peter Palese is an internationally well-known researcher, who works on the development of a universal influenza virus vaccine based on a chimeric hemagglutinin approach. During my time in his laboratory, I worked in an excellent international working environment with world-class researchers and state-of-the-art-facilities. I gained a lot of theoretical and practical work experience and together with his outstanding team, I solved problems which occurred during my master's thesis in a very professional way. Furthermore, I was able to broaden my scientific perspectives at international conferences (CEIRS) and expanded my research network with people from different fields all around the world. The biomedical institute highly supported students, who were dedicated, hard-working and enthusiastic about their research.

Contacts within the host institution, inclusion in the organization:

From the very first day, I was highly welcomed by everyone within the host institution. My principle investigator, the PostDocs, the PhD students and my colleagues were all very friendly and supportive during my entire research stay abroad. I personally felt as

a part of a bigger team and shared the same liberal values and ethics of the institution. English was the international business language through which it was possible to speak and interact with researchers from different nationalities. Even though I was very busy with my master's project and did not have much free time, the host institution offered a lot of different teambuilding and other outside activities like soccer, table tennis and bouldering. Besides this, I was supposed to attend to weekly seminars and meetings and to represent the research group at scientific international conferences.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan Students and fellows:

In an extremely competitive academic field, I highly recommend an international working experience to every student, who wants to improve on a personal and scientific level. The Marshall Plan Scholarship is an immense support to accomplish your carrier plans. I was not only supported financially by the foundation, but also had many options to attend and to participate at national and international meetings. Therefore, I am very thankful and proud to mention the merit-based scholarship in my curriculum vitae. Through this exceptional international experience, various different doors with entirely new opportunities have opened during my research stay abroad and after my comeback. I have immediately found a suitable PhD studentship in the desired research field of virology, which I will start upon my successfully completion of my master's thesis and defense. In case you became interested, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be more than happy to answer upcoming questions and share my experiences with you.

Contact e-mail after completion of research stay:

Prof. Dr. Peter Palese
Horace W. Goldsmith Professor and Chair
Department of Microbiology
Professor, Department of Medicine
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
One Gustave L Levy Place, Box 1124
New York, New York 10029-6574

Jordan Bragg
Official Secretary of
Prof. Dr. Peter Palese