

**Marlene Geyer**

**Marshall Plan Scholarship-Field report**

IMC FH Krems and  
iPS Core Facility  
Harvard Stem Cell Institute  
Harvard University

I conducted my Master`s thesis research at the Harvard Stem Cell Institute in the iPS core facility under supervision of Laurence Daheron, PhD. I got the chance to work for a prestigious university for 9 months (from February to October 2019). The Harvard Stem Cell Institute is in the middle of the main Harvard campus surrounded by a beautiful landscape and many museums.

As Boston is home of Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other good universities, the living expenses are very high (around \$2000 a month). I would recommend starting to look for a place to live as early as possible, because it is very hard to find a rather cheap place (~\$1000) close to your working place. Here, I want to thank the Marshall Plan Scholarship again to help me cover a lot of my expenses and for giving me the opportunity to see all the amazing things Boston and Massachusetts in general have to offer. Moreover, weekend trips to New York, Canada (Niagra Falls, Toronto, Montreal and Quebec), Washington DC and the little suburban cities like the famous Salem are a must. So, you will never get bored!

Meeting new people and making friends was quite easy in Boston, as students and interns come from all over the world to establish a career. So, there are a lot of people in Boston, who also just stay for a couple of months and thus were in the same position as me. I was very lucky to be able to work in a very young team. My coworkers and me did not only spent time in the laboratory but met in the evenings or at weekends and enjoyed our free time together. There are a lot of leisure activities around Boston and what I loved most, was the opportunity to do typical American things, such as going to the Arcade, trying different fast food restaurants, watching sports games and just being part of the “American Way Of Living”.

Regarding my work in the laboratory, it was a huge pleasure to work with a multicultural team. We introduced a new game in the lab, as we had the “word of the day”, which was translated into the 6 different languages we spoke in the lab. So, in addition to improving my scientific knowledge, I was able to learn basic words in various languages. The primary investigator, Laurence Daheron, PhD, was very thoughtful as she not only taught

me a lot of new techniques but was always curious about my opinion on new experiments. Once a week, I met with her to discuss my ongoing projects and I was then allowed to independently conduct research. In the last few months, we established a journal club to stay up-to-date on stem cell research and new techniques that would help the iPS core facility to improve their services of gene editing and reprogramming.

Also, the Harvard Stem Cell Institute organized a lot of seminar series and symposia, where I had the chance to meet internationally renowned scientists, such as Nobel prize winner Shinya Yamanaka. It was an amazing experience to work in an elite university, because of the competitive environment and the people who constantly motivate you to be curious for the newest research topics and approaches used in the laboratory.

For future students, who plan to work abroad, I can just say: put your doubts and fears aside, performing research in a foreign country and especially in an ivy-league school is worth it. I did not only enjoy learning a lot of new things in the laboratory and about stem cells, but I also fell in love with the country and I will come back for sure!