

The opportunity to study for half a year at UT Southwestern has had a profound impact on my future career. I was able to expand my dissertation topic by including relevant topics such as Alzheimer's on my current topics arteriosclerosis and cancer, in my dissertation. Because my dissertation topic also has a connection to Alzheimer's. I realized that I wanted to know more about it and had the opportunity there with the leading experts M.D. Herz to cooperate. The Marshall Plan Scholarship has given me this opportunity and I am very grateful to this day.

When I started studying chemistry, I had an idea that I was interested in research, but I did not know in what area. My research trip has rekindled my love for biochemical work, which led me to continue my education in a focused way and to get more involved in this matter.

The opportunity to move away from everyday life at the University of Innsbruck and to challenge myself in science was transformative. In this half-year, I began to consider the integration of new biochemical methods (CRISPR-Cas9 & Molecular Cloning) for my dissertation. I also found that the quality of my training environment was such that I wanted to make full use of my time, which in retrospect brought me more depth and quality into my dissertation. Furthermore, the stay made me think, not to aim for a doctorate.

In M.D. Herz Lab, I learned so much. I was able to acquire critical and creative thinking and how to create, conduct and analyse scientific studies. I also learned how to introduce myself to a lot of respected doctors and scientists (2 Nobel laureates). During my research stay I have made numerous presentations about my work, written several abstracts, made a final report, established new mouse lines and personally developed myself.

Not only did this program fill my intellectual passions, it also helped me in many other ways. During my studies, a family member suffered from atherosclerosis-related stroke and he was luckily saved from death. However, this person lives to this day with consequences, as this stroke has irreparably damaged regions in the brain. This has made the research for me a lot more personal. To be part of it, to develop new drugs and therapies was the incentive for me to choose such a dissertation topic.

In addition, the unique continuity and timetable of a full-time researcher has allowed me to get more involved in the subject matter and focus 100% on my area. In Innsbruck, weekly

lectures and seminars often force people to interrupt work and sacrifice valuable working time. I really enjoyed working in the lab all day in the lab and the result speaks for itself.

After completing my doctorate, I intend to further specialize in areas such as tumours, Alzheimer's and atherosclerosis, and in addition to advance my doctorate with a fixed position. Without the guidance of M.D. Herz, including fantastic education environment, dedicated staff and assistant professors and excellent science, I do not know if I have ever thought about such a way.

Overall, my work experience at UT Southwestern was extremely positive. I was very pleased with the amount and type of things I learned and experienced during my six-month stay abroad as a research associate at UT Southwestern. I believe that UT Southwestern provides the best possible support to every researcher and offers him many opportunities for professional and personal development. I am so happy, and proud that I have this internship at UT Southwestern and I can recommend this institution to everybody who wants to achieve big goals in the field of medical research.

For students who are interested in a stay abroad in the US, I can highly recommend the Marshall Plan Scholarship. The communication with the staff of the foundation was extremely straightforward and the answers were competent and helpful. The Marshall Plan Scholarship supports you in the hardest part of a US stay - the visa. Since most of those who are interested in getting a J1 visa, they have to secure a high amount of debt in order to be able to apply at all. Most universities do not hire short-term scientific staff and therefore you have to take care of this money sum yourself. This is where the Marshall Plan Scholarship comes in and allows you to realize your desire to stay in the United States.