

## **MARSHALL PLAN RESEARCH PROJECT FIELD REPORT**

Sarah Mayfield, Ph.D. student, Department of Food Science, University of Arkansas,  
Fayetteville, AR, USA

### **TITLE OF PROJECT:**

“Aroma Characterization of Wines Produced from Grapes Grown in the State of Arkansas”

### **SUPERVISORS**

**Dr. Erich Leitner**, University Professor, Food Chemistry, Institute of Analytical Chemistry and  
Food Chemistry, Graz University of Technology, Graz, Austria

**Dr. Renee Threlfall**, Research Scientist, Enology and Viticulture, Department of Food Science,  
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR, USA

**General impression of research stay abroad:**

Overall, I was very pleased with my research stay abroad. I was able to complete all of my planned research during my three month stay at Graz Technical University. I worked in the Institute of Analytical Chemistry and Food Chemistry under the supervision of Dr. Erich Leitner. Although I worked mostly with his graduate students and lab techs, due to his busy travel schedule, I still met with Dr. Leitner about twice per month to discuss my research results and progress. His lab operated in a very efficient, organized manner that enabled me to complete all of my planned analyses.

My time in Graz was made easier by the fact that I had actually previously been to the institute for a short-course during the summer of 2017. In fact, I did some “practice” work in Dr. Leitner’s lab during that time, because I knew I would want to come back to Graz to do research under the Marshall Plan program.

**Quality of the host institution:**

I felt that the Institute of Analytical Chemistry and Food Chemistry at Graz Technical University was a high-quality research institution. The lab facilities were very clean, organized, and efficient. I was assigned my own desk and desktop computer to work at on the first day of my arrival. Overall, I felt that the students and staff in Dr. Leitner’s laboratories were very well-prepared for my arrival and very helpful during my stay. In addition, the instruments in the laboratories were state-of-the-art and allowed me to obtain very informative data.

My research at TU Graz was made easier due to the fact that I had previously worked in this lab and had experience with the types of instruments I was using. So, I was able to operate fairly independently, but people were still there to help me if needed.

**Contacts with the host institution, inclusion in the organization:**

I felt very included with the host institution at TU Graz, both while at work and during social activities. The students and staff were welcoming and very helpful with any questions I had, and I was able to spend time with them outside of work as well.

I also felt very included in the lab environment at the institute. In particular, we had “Ph.D. seminar” meetings every two weeks where myself and the other Ph.D. students in the lab would present our research findings to Dr. Leitner. Dr. Leitner made sure that the other students gave me a thorough introduction to their projects, so that I knew what was happening in the laboratories outside of my own project.

**Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows:**

I would recommend that future Marshall Plan students and fellows begin planning for their Marshall Plan stay well in advance. At the beginning of my Ph.D. studies, I knew that I wanted to conduct research at TU Graz, so we planned this into my project. Therefore, the work I did at TU Graz fits seamlessly into my thesis, rather than just being a “side project” and taking time away from my actual thesis work.

I would also recommend applying for the Marshall Plan scholarship as early as you can in advance of your desired stay. I applied by the September 2018 deadline to travel to Graz from February-May 2019. I did not find out that I received the scholarship until mid-September. So, I had very little time to buy a plane ticket, find a place to stay, and get together all of the other paperwork that I needed to apply for a visa. I had to travel to Washington, D.C. to apply for a visa and the earliest appointment I could get was on January 4<sup>th</sup>, so just a little over a month before my scheduled departure date. Therefore, I was nervous that I would not receive my visa in time. All of this was made more complicated by the fact that it was during the winter holidays.

In addition, I would recommend making sure that you have enough money saved up (or that your parents are willing to help) to cover many expenses before you receive the first Marshall Plan payment. I ended up spending about \$4000 upfront (plane ticket, security deposit at apartment, travel to Washington, D.C. to apply for a visa, visa application fees, various other travel expenses, first months rent at apartment) before I was reimbursed after I got to Graz. You will have to sign a contract in person once you arrive at your Austrian university, and you won't receive the first payment until this is mailed to the Marshall Plan offices in Vienna.

Finally, I would encourage future Marshall Plan students to work with the international office at the Austrian university they will attend throughout the application process and while they are submitting all of the required documents on the online application portal. I found that the TU Graz international office was more helpful with this than the Marshall Plan website.

**Contact information after completion of stay:**

Email: [sem013@uark.edu](mailto:sem013@uark.edu)

Phone: +1-210-508-5664

Address: 250 N. Aqua Xing, apt. 11, Fayetteville, AR, USA, 72701