

Field Report for the Marshall Plan Scholarship

MPS fellow: Lisa John

Research period: 30.03.2020 – 07.08.2020

Host University: Florida State University, Tallahassee, USA

Home University: University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria Campus Wels,
Austria

General impression of my research stay abroad

I am currently in my 6th semester of my Bachelor studies at the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria in the program named Biotechnology and Environmental Engineering. It is pretty obvious that the Florida State University has a lot of experience with international students the process of application, acquiring the visa and the registration to work was straightforward. Even though I had to return to Austria after a rather short time, due to the Corona-Virus pandemic, I really enjoyed the time I had in the US. I returned to Austria on the 2nd of April and since then I was working remotely, which was possible because the Marshall Plan Foundation generously allowed to amend my proposal. Getting the authorizations and everything organized in order to continue my internship was quite quick and simple for which I am very thankful. Although I spent most of my internship in home office, I still gained a lot of experience especially with regard to research work. The internship prepared me for what it will be like to work in research.

Quality of the institution

The Florida State University has a very good reputation for its research work, I can only talk about the things going on in the Institute of Molecular Biophysics, but the topics dealt with there are extremely interesting and relevant. The Institute has a close association with the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory; therefore, they can utilize nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy (NMR spectroscopy) and mass spectroscopy (MS) to analyze structure and dynamics of protein complexes. Other devices used in the course of biophysical research are cryo-electron microscopy (FEI Titan Krios), x-ray crystallography (SER-CAT, Argonne National Laboratory) and computer simulation. The know-how and experience of the staff also contributes to the quality of the institution.

Contacts within host institution and integration into the organization

As I already mentioned getting into the FSU and getting all the needed documents (application; visa; work registration) was straightforward. The responsible department, the CGE, and my contact person Angelique Stevens were more than helpful throughout my whole internship. My main contact at FSU was Dr. Robert Silvers who is an Assistant Professor and is also leading his own research group which is called the Silvers Lab. We had weekly meetings in order to discuss upcoming questions and the progress of my research. By working with him, I have gained experience that will help me in my later professional life.

Recommendation for future Marshall Plan Students / Fellows

The most important thing is to start the application process for the scholarship early enough in order to avoid unnecessary stress. The same recommendation applies concerning the visa process and the search of an accommodation in the US. It is also advisable to get a car since the public transportation in Tallahassee is really poor. Of course, you can also go by foot, but it takes a long time because everything is so far apart and in Florida it is hot and humid all the time which makes this option less attractive. Even though I was unable to travel due to the pandemic going on, I would warmly recommend it to future fellows. If you do an internship at FSU like I did, the beach is only about 40 minutes away. I would recommend taking the opportunity to apply for the Marshall Plan Scholarship because you will gain a lot of experience in your profession and get to know another culture. However, future fellows should keep in mind that the grant is not enough and that they will have to look to find additional financial resources.