

Field Report:

My Research Stay Abroad at American University

The aim of this report is to write about my experiences during my Marshall Plan research stay abroad. My stay abroad was shorted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I stayed one month in Washington, DC at my host universtiy. After that, the research cooperation was continued online for six months. During the total duration of seven months, I wrote my master's thesis on "Generating Non-Verbal Communication From Speech".

General impression of your research stay abroad

Although my stay abroad was shortened, the experience was still great and the journey was worthwhile. I got to know interesting personalities and learned more about the American culture. The people I met outside university were extremely welcoming, supportive and easy to talk with.

Quality of the host institution

Overall, the services available and the quality of the host university were the same as what I experienced from the universities in Graz. The infrastructure on the campus included a bus service, nearby restaurants and supermarkets, recreational areas, and sports facilities.

The staff from the international office was very friendly and supportive. Consequently, first days went smooth and I immediately was a full student on campus. The facilities of the Game Lab, in which my office was located, were new and it contained camera, computer, screen, interaction and many other devices that were perfectly suited for my research.

Contacts with the host institution, inclusion in the organization

The highlight of my stay was the perfect inclusion into the ongoing projects of my research group at the host university. The main reason for the perfect inclusion was my host supervisor who introduced me to many faculty members and generated collaboration opportunities. He also invited me to attend important meetings such as grant application meetings. There, I also met professors from different fields and universities and learned a lot about how research is conducted in the US.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows

I totally recommend a research visit to the US. From an administrative point of view, the most difficult task was the search for housing. In my case, the host institution did not offer on-campus housing for visiting scholars and I had to look for an accommodation off-campus. Finding a suitable accommodation was difficult because the number of available units in March is low. Usually, leases are signed in summer and therefore the number of available units is much higher in the summer months. Thus, I recommend doing extensive

housing search before traveling to the US and making appointments beforehand. However, I would recommend not signing a lease from abroad, because it is better to have a look at the property and the neighborhood on-site. I would suggest spending the first week of the stay in the US to view as many (at least ten) housing options as possible. This not only allows for getting a good picture of what options there are available but also helps getting to know different neighborhoods and the local area. Additionally, one must keep in mind that paperwork and checks which also takes some time are needed to be completed before one can move in.

All in all, I enjoyed my stay abroad and the collaboration very much and I totally recommend a US research visit.