

Keziah Sheldon

US Fulbright Marshall Plan STEM Award 2019-20

University of Vienna

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Field Report

I was a US Fulbright Marshall Plan STEM Award grantee for 2019-20, and the year was a very eventful and rewarding experience. I joined the Dr. Philip Walther group at the University of Vienna Quantum Photonics group in the Physics Department. It was a great experience to study and research at the same facility that Erwin Schrödinger, Lise Meitner, and many other great scientists worked at, and inspired me to continue my learning and understanding of quantum physics. I was also invited to attend a quantum physics conference, the Austrian Quantum Information Conference 2019, within my first 2 months of arriving, and I appreciated the inclusion as well as the opportunity to listen to prominent scientists give presentations and talks about cutting edge research in the field. I was also given assistance in being able to audit a quantum photonics class at the University of Vienna to give me more informational background to prepare for my project, and the coordinators of the program were also able to fit me into the Master's level quantum photonics praktikum,

which I appreciated as I learned a lot from the praktikum. From this experience I am more familiar with concepts in quantum optics and also working at an optics bench. In addition to the academic inclusion I experienced at the Walther group, I also had a social aspect as I was included to the University of Vienna's annual quantum physics Christmas party at the AKH, and I had a great time meeting other quantum physics students and scientists at the University of Vienna.

While at the University of Vienna I worked on a project with both the Walther and the Kiesel groups, and I was assisted by PhD graduate students in both groups to help me achieve my project goals. I clearly recommend future Marshall Plan students and grantees to get involved in either journal clubs or classes to get in a social and academic support network of other graduate students, as I found it to be very helpful; and the sooner to get involved the better. I also recommend future Marshall Plan grantees to attend as many colloquia as possible to learn about the full scope of research activities not only within the department or group; but also in their collaboration network.

I lived in Vienna, Austria; in fact only 1 street away from Freud's old house. The amount of history and prominent scientists within walking distance is remarkable to me, and I did not take it for granted while I lived there. I also value the quality of life in Austria, particularly with regards to work/life balance, healthcare, transportation systems, and the relative close proximity of many places to hike, climb, swim, and cycle. While the COVID-19 crisis shortened my time in the research lab, I particularly appreciated the guidance and support from Fulbright Austria during that difficult time. As a US citizen, I highly recommend the experience I had to other students from the US to apply to the Fulbright Austria for the Austrian experience, as I value this learning and experiencing another culture.