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Subject: Field report

Dear Madam or Sir,

I hereby would like to submit the field report of my eleven-week stay at the University of Pittsburgh during the spring term of the academic year 2019/2020 sponsored by the Marshall Plan Foundation. I originally planned to stay at the University of Pittsburgh from beginning of January until end of April, but I eventually decided to travel back to Europe in the end of March due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The field report will mainly refer to the research stay in Pittsburgh.

General impression of research period abroad

My overall impression of the research stay at the University of Pittsburgh is excellent. My local supervisor in Pittsburgh, Armin Schikorra, was - as expected - the perfect choice to tackle the problem of higher regularity for solutions of evolution equations related to p -elastic energies. I have learned many new techniques thanks to him and we have developed an approach to attack the research problem successfully. Beyond that, Armin Schikorra always ensured continual communication despite the Coronavirus pandemic. Besides my fantastic supervision, I enjoyed being part of an active and engaging community at the University of Pittsburgh, discovering the vibrant research landscape in the US, and establishing further research contacts as well as friendships that will hopefully last long. I wish I could have stayed until the end of my planned research period.

Quality of the host institution

My supervisor on site, Armin Schikorra, was the perfect choice with regard to the research aims and, additionally to that, he was always very helpful and supportive throughout my stay. Arriving at the Department of Mathematics, I found an excellent research environment for a mathematician. I was provided my own desk in a shared office with welcoming officemates and a blackboard, plenty of writing materials as well as access to the printer, computer lab and social rooms. Furthermore, all my communication with the University of Pittsburgh, in particular the Department of Mathematics and the Office of International Services, were completely satisfactory from the beginning. I was also given my own Pitt-Account to reach all University of Pittsburgh online services as well as a Golden Card to access the building of the Department of Mathematics, fitness centers and other facilities throughout the campus. On top of that, the department offered various advanced courses, research seminars, workshops and other activities, in which I participated on a regular basis, and even encouraged to attend math talks at the Carnegie Mellon University, from

which I took advantage once.

Contacts within host institution / integration in the organization

Throughout my stay at the University of Pittsburgh I felt very well-integrated. In my first week on site I was provided lots of useful information about the department, university, city and social activities by the Office of International Services. When I arrived at the Department of Mathematics, my local supervisor Armin Schikorra introduced me to all faculty members that have overlapping research interests as well as to members of the Pitt Math Graduate Student Organization. The latter organized an optional Graduate Student Seminar, in which I participated regularly and once even volunteered to give a talk. As I was added to the Math Post Doc mailing list, I always felt very well-informed about departmental activities. Once per week a departmental-wide colloquium took place, combined with coffee and cookies prior to that, which was later replaced by an online social hour due to the pandemic. Also from the first week on (until the math building was closed due to the Coronavirus regulations) I regularly went for lunch with Armin Schikorra and other PhD students or visitors. All of that led to exciting conversations, input and encounters which gave me deeper insights into US culture and academia.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan Students/Fellows

I would recommend to start early with the preparations for the visa application since it can take couple of months in total. I also suggest to carefully study health insurance providers before choosing one and to pay attention to the activities of the local Graduate Student Organization. Beyond that, I highly recommend to seize every moment and socialize as much as possible (in accordance to the schedule of the research project).

I am more than grateful for having received the opportunity to visit Prof. Dr. Armin Schikorra at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania for (most of) the spring term of 2020. I believe that the Marshall Plan Scholarship Program improved and boosted my expertise at this early career stage of academic research and enhanced strong and thriving collaborations between Austria and the United States of America.

Yours sincerely,

Nicole Vorderbermeier