

Marshall Plan Scholarship Field Report

MSP student: Rafaela Vostatek

Time period: February 2020 – December 2020

Host university: Boston Children's Hospital – Harvard Medical School
Lab Group of Leonard Zon, MD

Home university: University of Applied Sciences Vienna, Austria

To Whom It May Concern:

General Impression

A characteristic of the US is being a versatile country, not only geographically seen but also the climate zone, the language slang, the different cities, and their look - you could never get bored. But Boston self is famous for the European look, some areas are mostly alike Great Britain. There are a lot of must-see places, in Boston as well as in the whole US. It was difficult to decide for one city, but Boston was for me the right decision. It was quite easy to find an appropriate place for my research stay abroad and I would never ever want to miss this experience. Honestly, it was not the same as I had imaged, of course, because I never thought that a global pandemic would interrupt my plans, but I learned a lot during that time. If I have the chance in the future I would do it again. My overall impression is really great. I met nice people, saw beautiful places and have personally developed further.

Quality of the Host Institution and Contacts within the host institution

It is hard to make any statement about the stay because everything was different then normally. I worked under different circumstances and also the meetings were only virtually. However, I found the institute and my research group awesome. I worked at the Boston Children's Hospital in the Group of Leonard Zon, MD which is part of the Harvard Medical School. I also got an ID from Harvard which makes it possible to attend various sport courses and gyms from Harvard for a few dollars. I also had the possibility to attend a lot of different meetings and seminars. The supervision in my group was excellent, especially during the difficult time. We had more than two meetings per week, also some social activities like Beer Hour via Zoom, so it was awesome. We also had some joined lab meetings with other research groups; therefore I had the possibility to meet a lot of different people and characters. I had the feeling that I was really engaged in the group and everyone cared about me.

Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows

I would recommend future Marshall Plan students a balanced work-life relationship., Try to do as many fun things as possible, then you can focus on the work during the week. I can also recommend starting to find a suitable working place early and when you got one also start with the visa application right after as the whole process takes more than three months. I was lucky because my visa was sponsored from the Harvard Medical School and I just had to do the online form (which takes roughly two hours). To find a suitable accommodation I would have looked on Facebook, there are a lot of different groups and also the app Zillow is good. There is also the website Craigslist, which many people use, but there are a lot of scam advertisements, so I would try it either via Facebook or Zillow.

I can totally recommend the stay in Boston, even if it was during a pandemic and I couldn't do all the things that I wanted. Boston has a special charm; the city as well as the country is very versatile. You can discover so many beautiful places and also the research here is very good. I learned a lot of different things, which is not only helpful for my scientific career but also for me personally. I grew through the months, through the difficult time which resulted in a lifelong learned message with unbelievable moments.