



CHUST – Chemical U.S. Travels



Travel Story 201X

Name: Sandra Brantestig

Year and line of study at KTH: 4

Which university did you visit? (Name, city, state) University of Florida

Time frame: 8 weeks

Visa type: J-1 visa

Insurance: One of the recommended from the university: ISP international Student Protection: Trail Blazer

Scholarship: SEK 13 744 from the biotechnology department at KTH

Please write about your travel, internship and time in the U.S. by answering the questions below as detailed as possible, in 1-2 pages. You may answer in Swedish or English.

Project description

Can you describe the project you were working on? What subject area did it cover?

I worked together with a PhD student and assisted her in her research in the citrus greening project. We investigated the activity of an endoribonuclease which may be involved in the citrus greening of the citrus trees in Florida, caused by the bacteria *Liberibacter Asiaticus*. We injected trees with the purified protein (the endoribonuclease) and we also purified and tested the activity of different mutants of the protein. The lab techniques that I was shown and then performed was protein purification (IMAC, including cell lysis with French Press), Western blots, RNA extraction and RNA degradation assays (to test the activity of the protein). I was also shown in vitro transcription but I never performed it by myself.

How did the contact with the Professor/ supervisor work?

The professor was really nice and kind but I had most contact with the PhD student who were my supervisor. She was really kind and helpful!

How long was an average day in the lab?

The length of the days in the lab was dependent on how long my supervisor was there, which varied a bit but it was generally from 9.15 AM to 5-6 PM. I didn't have to work in the weekends.

What new things have you learned during the project? Was your prior knowledge sufficient for you to handle the tasks presented to you? How much responsibility were you given?

I learned how a PhD project may be structured and planed, and how to perform all the techniques mentioned above including preparation of e.g. SDS-PAGE gels, Agarose DNA gels and protocols for the RNA assays. It was really fun to actually practice the techniques that I had only performed in the lab courses at KTH before! My prior knowledge was sufficient. I was given responsibility to perform all techniques by myself when I had learned them. However, compared to some other students who went to this lab precious years and Caroline who went this year, I did not get a project on my own. I just helped

my supervisor with her work. It seems like this differs depending on if they have new projects/how many new projects they have for the summer. Anyway, I learned a lot since my supervisor showed me everything she was doing, and gave me responsibility to participate in here work.

Campus life

What was life like at the university you visited? Campus life, nightlife and potential trips?

I think there is a lot to do if you want to! We (the three of us from Sweden) stayed busy every weekend! Gainesville is a student town so there are a lot of things to do as a student. At 8.30 PM, you can see the bats flying out from the Bat-houses at Lake Alice, which furthermore is a lake you can walk around and if “you’re lucky” see alligators in. The campus has both outdoor and indoor sports, gyms, and different places to visit. We did a lot of the activities mentioned in previous travel stories, so would I recommend reading them for inspiration. *Regal Cinema*, is a nice movie theater and the *Oaks Mall* is a nice shopping mall.

I love running, so I joined a running team (Team Florida Track club). On Tuesday’s and Thursday’s, they ran at campus so then it was easy to join without having a car. On Saturday’s and Sunday’s, they ran outside town so then I had a ride with someone in the team who had a car. Overall, you “need” a car when you live in Gainesville because the distances between different places is quite long. However, the buses take you everywhere around campus even though it takes longer time than if you have a car. There is a good app you can download to see when the busses are going. We also used uber a lot, which was not that expensive when we were three sharing.

I would recommend reading Liv’s travel story both for information about the nightlife and good restaurants. We went to the *piano bar* one Thursday for girl’s night (special free drinks for girls) with some girls from the lab, which was really fun. We had dinner at the restaurant *The Top* and *Bahama Breeze* with people from the lab, which was nice restaurants. I also had lunch with people from the lab at the restaurant *Olive garden* once, which had good Italian food (but you have to drive or take a bus to get there).

We did a lot of trips with people from the lab who had cars, which made it easier to do trips. The only place to rent a car over a day during the weekends was at the airport. Then you have to take an uber to get there and back. We did it once and drove to clear water beach, which was a really beautiful beach! With the people from the lab we went to *Aquatica SeaWorld’s waterpark* in Orlando, *Universal Studios* in Orlando, to the *east coast beach* at St Augustin and to the *Ichetucknee Springs State Park* for tubing. Gainesville have a lot of nice springs.

How much did it cost living in your city? How did you finance the stay in the U.S? Scholarship or private funds? If you received any scholarship, did you need to send any documents to the university in order to receive the funds?

The scholarship from KTH covered my housing which was \$896.50 for 2 months (6/6-2/8) and also some of the cost of my flight tickets. The rest, I financed myself. It was not very expensive to live in Gainesville. You could notice that Gainesville is a student town in that sense as well. Buses are free and the food was not very expensive.

How did you find housing during your stay at the university and how much did it cost? How satisfied were you with the housing situation?

The three of us who went to University of Florida was recommended the student housing complex *University Club Apartments* from the CHUST interns from last year. So, we emailed them and all of us got a room in an apartment (of 4 rooms). I can also recommend University Club. It was overall clean, and localized in a nice neighborhood, it has a pool, a gym and is located around 2,5 km from the lab. There is also a bus stop right outside the complex, from which you can take the bus directly to the lab in 5 minutes or to one of the grocery stores (*Publix Super Market at Williston Plaza*) in the area. There are a lot of other housing complexes for students in Gainesville. I heard that it is generally not hard to find an apartment to lease, however, that it might be difficult to find a place that leases apartments only for 2 months/over the summer.

Application

Were there any problems that did arise during your stay that you think future students need to know about? In such case, which problems did you encounter?

No

What documents did you need to send to the university and what did you need to bring to the embassy in order to get your visa approved?

To the Embassy:

Everything on the list on their website:

<http://www.ustraveldocs.com/se/se-niv-typej.asp>

To the University:

When I accepted the internship, and wrote to the professor, she got me directly in contact with a girl who works with the visa process at the university. From her, I received the following:

For VISA processing:

The deadline to submit papers for processing is at least 60 days from the start date. It takes about 34 days for these papers to be processed. Give time also for applying for VISA from the country of origin. For more information, please go to this website: <http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/evs/>

To expedite the processing of papers, please submit the required documents on the list below:

1. DS2019 Form – *attached; please fill in all information needed*
2. signed letter of invitation - ***Graciela**, the template attached; fill out the blanks, sign and ask Scholar to sign before returning to me.*
3. copy of passport for scholar and dependents - biometrics page
4. CV printed in English
5. diploma - copy of original and authenticated translation in English
6. verification of funding in English, showing U.S. dollar amounts. Verification can be:
 - Organization/Government/Agency funding (Official statement including exchange visitors name and program dates)
 - Personal funding by scholar (requires a current bank statement in English listing scholar's name and the currency must be specified; Certificate of Funding Responsibility form is attached)
 - Private source funding (requires a Certificate of Financial Responsibility and a current bank statement)
7. The University of Florida also requires Scholars and dependents to pay \$100 each as processing fee to be paid online by the exchange visitor on the Division of Continuing Education (DoCE) website (<http://reg.conferences.dce.ufl.edu/Basic/1400036947>). After the payment has been submitted, the visitor will receive via email a receipt confirming registration within 24 hours, and then a receipt confirming payment within 3 – 5 business days. Information and instructions for the payment process are posted on the EVS website <https://www.ufic.ufl.edu/EVS/InvitingJ1Scholar.html> (Inviting a J-1 Scholar).
8. UFID Request Form – please fill out for your university appointment

May we publish your travel story on the official CHUST webpage (kongligkemi.se/chust) so that future exchange students can be helped by the information?

Yes

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this form and share your story!
Name the document according to: “University – Your Name” and send it as a PDF to
chust@k.kth.se

Best regards,
CHUST committee 2016/ 2017