

**RISE intern:** Rince Wong

**Host institution:** Universität Regensburg

**Field of study:** Chemistry

I first heard about the RISE program through friends who participated in the program and decided to apply. At first, despite the glowing reviews from the former RISE students, I wasn't too sure about what to expect. However, as soon as I was in Germany, any doubts of me having a great summer in Germany were out the window.

During my flight from Vancouver to Frankfurt, I met a couple from Munich who were so friendly and warm that it further convinced me that I've signed up for a pretty amazing three months. In fact, the warmth and friendliness I experienced during my nine hour flight was extended to my whole three months' stay. My Ph.D supervisor, in particular, was very helpful and patient throughout as I bombarded her with multiple questions about our project and Germany. What was also great about my supervisor was she allowed me to take the lead, so to speak, of our project, which allowed me to develop many skills, both scientific and otherwise. It was a really great time in the lab with her and my other coworkers; we shared a lot of jokes, sometimes we shared our frustrations, and mostly, I got the chance to really understand what it's like to be in graduate studies and work in an academic environment.

The working environment was indeed challenging in many aspects. Firstly, I had opted to choose a project in pharmacology, a field in which I had no experience in. Previously, I had worked in industry as an intern in synthetic organic chemistry and had come to the conclusion that I would like to try something with a more biochemical focus. As a result, I was ecstatic when I was chosen by my Ph.D supervisor to work on this project with her. I was able to physically conduct experiments that I've only previously learned about in lectures, such as PCR, electrophoresis, fluorescence microscopy, and immunoblotting. In addition to performing experiments, I was reading and researching more into my topic, which added to my scientific knowledge and provided me with a deeper understanding of other fields outside of chemistry. I also enjoyed the atmosphere of working in the lab, where everyone was supportive and provided me with tips to help with the scientific process, even though sometimes the tips were just us jokingly requesting for each other's presence for a certain type of experiment since it worked for one of us and not for the other previously. Most importantly, my coworkers were invaluable when it came to me trying to understand the German education system and basically what graduate studies are like. They provided me with a wealth of information that allowed me to make an educated comparison between academic and industrial working environments.

Adding to my knowledge of the German system is the RISE conference held in July. The DAAD was amazing in the organization of the event, where we heard different speakers giving us information on the opportunities available to us overseas. Of course, the highlight of the weekend was meeting all the three hundred other students. It was overwhelming at first but I've made some lasting friendships because of that weekend. It

definitely was an amazing weekend that opened my eyes to the amount of variety present in the projects offered in this program.

On top of working and attending the RISE conference, I traveled around Germany, Switzerland, Czech Republic, and Italy. The amount of traveling I did is best summed up by my supervisor's comment: "Wow, you know more about Europe than me!" After the first two weeks of settling down, I traveled extensively on the weekends and my supervisor was very understanding in letting me take time off at times to make some of these trips. She also made incredible recommendations when I was trip planning. Traveling around Europe was an eye opener and helped me become a more organized person since there was a lot of trip planning. Despite the fact that I didn't understand the language, navigating myself around Germany and other European countries was relatively easy. I found that a smile goes a long way and just being aware of my surroundings help me learn so much about a different culture. By the end of the three months, I have picked up such a random vocabulary of German and some Italian (from friends in an exchange program) that I can say traveling in those countries will not be as nerve wrecking as it was at the beginning of my trip.

All in all, my time in Germany during this internship has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. Despite my initial hesitation, I am definitely glad I had chosen to participate in this program. It had helped me mature both scientifically and personally, as well as giving me the opportunity to meet great people and forge some incredible friendships. I would do it all over again without a moment's hesitation.

"I agree that my report and accompanying pictures are used by the DAAD in printed materials, presentations and on the website in order to inform funding organizations, sponsors, and students about the RISE program."