

Daniel McIntosh
TU Berlin
Aerodynamics Research
Aerospace Engineering

“ I agree that my report and accompanying pictures can be 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.”

I can summarize my summer experience in Berlin with the DAAD RISE program in one word, efficient. I have somehow experienced a relaxing summer vacation, attained relevant international work experience in my field of study and most of all benefited from Germany's excellent education system that fortunately includes the Berlin Akaflieg. Few programs besides the DAAD RISE program can offer such opportunities and even offer students financial support to partake in them.

My three-month internship in the Technical University of Berlin's Aerodynamics department was to assist a PHD student in conducting aerodynamics research. The research project consisted of several variations of actuators embedded on the airfoil surface that moved air perpendicular to the airfoil surface. This research required careful assembly, programming in MATLAB for data analysis and wind tunnel testing prior to performing actual test flights in a sailplane.

A typical day of work began at 10 AM. Fortunately Berlin, like many European cities, is bike friendly. My commute to work was my first experience exercising with a purpose; to go somewhere. The 40 minute bicycle route took me from East to West Berlin passing historic monuments and picturesque cobble stone streets. Upon arrival at work, my day consisted of working independently on a project or task that was suggested by my supervisor. Lunch was eaten with colleagues in the university dining facilities. At approximately 5 PM, the workday was over and my alternate bike ride home led me to open-air restaurants, bars and to the exploration of Berlin's neighborhoods.

A surprising amount of responsibility and control of the research was given to me as an assistant. Most likely this is due to the work competence that German students at my academic level have attained from what appears to be extensive experience with hands on work on their subject matter. Fortunately my education in the USA was sufficient to teach me the theory but unfortunately it only encompassed limited hands on work. This responsibility and independence that was granted to me by my supervisor was a significant factor in contributing to an educational experience.



Above: Myself in the pilot's seat during one of many training flights with the Berlin Akaflieg..

By far the highlight of my stay in Germany and consumer of every free hour of my weekend was my participation in the Berlin Akaflieg, a student club responsible for constructing, maintaining and flying sailplanes. Every weekend I journeyed to the neighboring town of Pritzwalk, 150 Km northeast of Berlin. In a huge farm home, housing approximately 20 students and adult club members, I spent the night. Upon the completion of breakfast, a weather briefing was conducted and sailplanes were removed from their hangers. Flight instruction continued until sunset on the farm's private airstrip. This extremely efficient and economical method of instruction allowed me to progress significantly in the conquest of attaining my pilot's license. As an officer of my university's Soaring Club in the U.S., I was impressed with the smooth operation of the club, vowing to bring a part of this efficiency back home.



Above: An Akaflieg club member pilot just seconds before touchdown on the first flight of the day.

Upon arrival to Germany I had not prior experience in the German language. As far as I can remember there has only been one situation where German was necessary and communicating in English to get my point across was not an option. Although not knowing German permits one to simply satisfy basic needs of survival with ease, such as attaining food, directions, etc, it significantly impedes in the process of establishing relationships with Germans. Therefore knowledge of basic German would have been beneficial in increasing

the depth and value of my interactions with Germans. Fortunately I have found that Germans are very accommodating and sometimes even eager to use the English they have been perfecting for years.

Most importantly, living in Europe has introduced me to a healthy social lifestyle of living that balances health, family, work and a generous vacation. For this reason I anticipate seeking a career in the region and I am confident that the RISE experience will play a major role in my first career step to Europe. I encourage all students in technical majors to invest in a summer experience with the DAAD RISE program.