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Place of internship: Universitat Duisburg-Essen
Field of study: Engineering/Computer Science
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The DAAD RISE program was an unforgettable experience and arguably one of the best and most productive experiences of my life. Throughout the summer I have grown academically, professionally, and perhaps most importantly, personally. I strongly recommend the program to anyone that is interested in living abroad (and even to those who aren't!). I would especially recommend the program to those engineers who don't have time in their schedules for a study abroad program.

After finding the DAAD website, I applied on a whim; I had never even seriously considered trying to do a study abroad program and I have to admit that I was very nervous when I was accepted into the RISE program. I wasn't sure that I was fully qualified for the position; I knew my language skills were lacking and as a natural introvert, I was worried I wouldn't be able to meet anyone.

Looking back now, I can confidently say that all of my worries were completely unfounded. I was well prepared for the work and my PhD student and the others in the department were always there to bring me up to speed when necessary. Although I had taken German in high school, it had been years since I had used it and for my first week I was completely overwhelmed by the language. However, everyone was extremely accommodating: I could always find someone who spoke English and people were generally happy to help me practice my German. All of my coworkers were very approachable and I felt like there was a really friendly atmosphere at work which made it a pleasure to come in everyday.

For me, one of the best parts of the summer was all of the new friends I made. I was surprised at how easy it was to find other RISE students and make travel plans with them. Every weekend of the summer I was able to find a group to travel with. During the summer I was able to visit so many interesting places such as Amsterdam, Berlin, Munich, Brussels, Luxemburg, Cologne, the Rhine valley, the black forest, and Heidelberg. As interesting and exciting as all of my travels were, my fondest memories are of meeting and interacting with the locals in Duisburg. At the university there was an incredible amount of diversity; I made friends with people from all continents (well, not Antarctica...) and I really enjoyed learning so much about so many different cultures.

Not only was my time outside of work extremely memorable and productive, but my time at work was equally so. I was working on developing virtual/augmented reality software for visualizing and editing a roller coaster. The user could wear a tracked head mounted display and use a pen and a panel to edit the track of a roller coaster in 3D. They could also ride a robo dome simulation of the ride while experiencing it with a 3D visualization. One of the other American students at the university was working on the robot's motion while I was working on the visualization of the ride. The most memorable moment of the summer was when, in the last week, both of our projects came together and we were able to experience the full roller coaster ride.

I want to thank the DAAD for providing me with such an amazing opportunity to leave my comfort zone, experience a different culture, participate in exciting cutting edge research and most importantly to grow personally and professionally.

“I agree that my report and accompanying pictures may 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.”

- Alexander Woods 29.8.08