

Alison Woo, University of Alberta, Chemical Engineering, TU Karlsruhe

I was excited to participate in the RISE program after only hearing praises about the internships from friends at my home University. However, I was hesitant about the cultural differences I'd encounter, as I had never previously travelled outside North America. Unfortunately, the 2-week language course in Berlin had already filled up and I had no prior knowledge of German, so I couldn't be less prepared. When I arrived in Karlsruhe, the town of my host institute, it was a bit of a shock; but a novel one. I was constantly surrounded by buzzing of unfamiliar speech, but I was able to rely on the English of younger people. Gradually I'd pick up words here and there and was able to get by with the small vocabulary I had built. It was always interesting to note all of the similarities between the cultures and enjoy the things I couldn't find back home.

I would arrive at work at around 9AM and leave for home at 5PM, with lunch and a coffee break in between. I ate with the PhD students at the Mensa (cafeteria), where prices were reasonable and a typical meal would cost 3 Euros. My research at **Universität Karlsruhe (TH)** involved investigating the suitability of ceramic foam sponges as a catalyst support in the partial oxidation of O-Xylene to Phthalic Anhydride (an industrial plasticizer). I examined the pressure drop across the ceramic foams. My PhD student was at the start of his research so my work included preliminary calibration of the gas chromatographer, and flow rate calibrations. I was able to discuss his project goals and take part in putting my own ideas into the system setup, as well as the details of how to carry out the experiments. Unfortunately, certain pieces of equipment were on order and software that we needed was in the process of being programmed and wasn't complete until the last week of my internship. However, I was always kept busy and had the chance to help other PhD and Masters students with their research, giving me a wider variety of work than I had expected. Students and faculty from Spain, Turkey, Venezuela and other parts of the world added to the cultural enrichment at the institute. It was great to experience life as a research student, making it very appealing to pursue post-graduate studies. My PhD

Alison Woo, University of Alberta, Chemical Engineering, TU Karlsruhe

student was always helpful and patient whenever I had questions in the lab and was very hospitable, ensuring that I had an easy transition into life in Germany.

During the length of my stay, I lived in the student dorms near campus. I would highly recommend this to save on the cost of rent (which was 250Euros), and the proximity to my institute was less than a 10-minute walk away. More importantly, I had the chance to live with 8 other students on my floor, all of whom were German. This allowed me to experience life in Germany, not as a tourist, but more as a local. Communication between the other students and I was a little reluctant at first, as we were both shy in speaking outside our native language. But the self-consciousness soon wore off and we became great friends. I had the chance to visit my dorm mates in their hometowns and travel nearly every weekend. The regions in Germany are so diversified, with each town and city having its own distinct character. As a whole though, I found the country to be technically competent, emphasizing quality and efficiency. The people were very patient, generous, and more than hospitable. I departed with places still left to explore and a desire to return. I was also able to venture to Paris, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Stockholm and even Estonia to name a few. With experience in laboratory research, new friendships made and unbelievable travel stories under my belt, the RISE program was an unforgettable experience that exceeded all my expectations.

\*\*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\*\*