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#### My DAAD RISE Professional Experience:

As part of the DAAD RISE Pro program I worked at the Paul-Ehrlich-Institute (PEI) in Langen, Germany just south of the city of Frankfurt for 6-months. The PEI is a governmental institute responsible for regulating and performing research into new medicines for the German and European markets. While there, I worked in a research group which studies new vaccine candidates for allergic diseases.

I completed my bachelor and master's work in Canada in the field of immunology. When I heard about the DAAD RISE Pro program from my university career development department and saw that they were offering a position at the Paul-Ehrlich-Institute (PEI) working with allergy vaccines, I wasted no time and applied. So far I haven't been disappointed.

I have previously been to Germany as a tourist on 3 separate occasions, and I thought that I experienced this beautiful country in quite some detail. However, living and working somewhere for 6-months is a completely different experience. Germany is a beautiful country; the people are extremely friendly and most importantly it is centrally located in Europe.

Working in Germany is different than working in North America. First, German employers invest heavily into their employees – they try to retain the best talent. Employees are treated very well having on average 30 days of vacation a year. Cafeterias are often subsidized by the employers and provide the workers great food every lunch time. Outings and retreats are organized on a regular basis. In return, employees are stereotypically efficient. Germans work very hard but they also relax very hard.

The research group I worked with quickly realized my previous experience in immunology and were not afraid to utilize me. I was put onto 3 different projects where I worked in finding the mechanism of action of vaccines in epithelial *in vitro* cell lines. I was given independence in designing my own experiments and doing my work. My work was very well funded and the facilities were very modern. I was given great support from my supervisor and the other members of the lab. We had weekly meetings to discuss my progress and I had to give a PowerPoint presentation every 2 months. I truly believe I contributed a great deal while working at the PEI and felt part of the team. Currently we are writing and working on two scientific manuscripts on which I will be a co-author, I am scheduled to present my findings at an internal colloquium and because of my hard work here I have been rewarded with a contract extension until at least March 2014.

During my time in Germany I took advantage of being centrally located within Europe. Frankfurt is a major transportation hub and is only an hour's flight or a 2-5 hour train ride away from great European cities such as Paris, Amsterdam, Prague, Zurich or Berlin. Most weekends I found myself in different countries visiting diverse places like Majorca in Spain to Budva in Montenegro. If you are very

organized, take advantage of cheap airlines like Ryanair which has a hub at Frankfurt Hahn airport (approximately a 2 hour bus ride from Frankfurt). If you book 2 months in advance, you can fly to places like Oslo, Majorca, Helsinki or other places in Eastern Europe for only 14 Euros one way.

Before embarking on your journey to Germany here is some advice I would like to offer you:

- 1) Plan ahead – Getting an apartment or room in larger cities such as Frankfurt is extremely challenging if you do not speak German. Seek help from your supervisor and start looking early. Read your contract in detail and make sure the landlord doesn't charge you extra fees. My landlord charged me a 200 Euro lawyer fee to write a contract, and when I needed to extend the contract he wanted to charge me this fee again. I consulted a lawyer at my institute and she told me this was illegal. I was eventually able to recoup some of these fees and I decided to move.
- 2) Learn German – Take a German course prior to arriving in Germany at the Goethe Institute (if your town/city has one). Courses are expensive but they are worthwhile. Most Germans speak English well, but getting around, purchasing things at supermarkets, town hall registrations and such are challenging without some knowledge of German.
- 3) Join clubs and get involved – After work clubs (sports, hobbies or just general social clubs) are very popular in Germany. I recently joined a bowling team and I am really having a great time. I interact with locals and this helps improve my German.
- 4) Take advantage of each weekend – Don't waste your weekends. Leave town, explore and travel as much as you can. Germany alone has a lot to offer. Europe is huge and 6-months simply is not enough.

The support received from the DAAD program was amazing throughout my stay in Germany. The conference in Dresden was a great forum to meet other DAAD RISE interns and was a nice paid-for way to see the beautiful city of Dresden. Martina and her team are always an email or phone call anything should go wrong. I am very grateful to have received this scholarship and had this great opportunity to visit and live in Germany. I am excited to be staying here longer and to further explore my surroundings. I would recommend this opportunity to driven individuals that want to learn and see something new.

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 *professional* program.