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Summer RISE Internship in Heidelberg

This summer I participated in the DAAD RISE program. I began the program after my third year of chemistry at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. I completed a project on jet aerosol printing of carbon nanotube ink at the physical chemistry institute of Heidelberg University. It was an educational, challenging, and exciting experience that allowed me to gain international experience in research and aided in my personal growth.

Heidelberg university is a world-renown university with great research facilities, international student population, and student-life. I was fortunate to have three other RISE students in the research group I was in, as well as fellow undergraduate students from Heidelberg University that created a very supportive network of friends and colleagues. Due to the international atmosphere of the group, I benefited from being able to learn how to communicate and work effectively with people from different backgrounds. Fortunately, there was no language barrier as all seminars and research discussions were conducted in English. Beyond a supportive network of people to help my research along, the laboratory facilities were exceptional; there was a wide range of modern equipment at my disposal that allowed me to be trained on new techniques that I did not learn from my home university. Overall, after discussing with fellow RISE students, we were all impressed with the caliber of German universities.

A typical day in Heidelberg would begin with arriving at the university at 9am and meeting with my PhD mentor to discuss my day's plans. After we had a plan for the day, we would begin our research. My PhD student taught me all of the necessary background knowledge and laboratory techniques so that I was confident in what I had to do. I would work on the

planned research for the day until 11:45am when the group would meet at the doors of the physical chemistry building and we would all go to lunch together. Attending the cafeteria as a group fostered a great bond between the group members that resulted in a supportive network to discuss research ideas, but also in a new group of friends. We would continue with our research until about 5pm. After the day in the lab, we would frequently participate in group activities that would range from rock climbing, bouldering, or a night at a local pub watching the eurocup. There was always a lot to do at the university and outside, and more importantly there was always a friend around.

The city of Heidelberg is an exceptionally beautiful city with a rich history. Beyond the academic growth in the classroom, I was really interested in learning about German culture and daily living. Heidelberg has a rich history and has retained its historical beauty as it was not damaged in World War II. However, there are remnants of the Nazi socialist party such as the amphitheatre they built on the small mountain in town. There is no better place to learn about European history than the actual locations of the historical events. Fortunately, I did not experience any culture shock living in Heidelberg as the city was used to an international body. Almost every German I encountered understood English and could have a conversation, but more importantly they were friendly and willing to help a foreigner. I lived in a house that I shared with 13 other roommates that were mainly German students, but also from other countries such as Portugal, Switzerland, France, and Luxembourg. Living in such a diverse environment rich in history further encouraged my personal growth.

I would recommend this program to any undergraduate student interested in expanding their horizons with international research experience. The network of friends and colleagues I gained is indispensable. Furthermore, being challenged to work in a new country and

environment reveals new aspects of your character that one may not have been aware of allowing for a lot of personal growth. This experience prepared me for challenges that may lie ahead in an unfamiliar work environment which inevitably will be encountered at some point in my future career. I am very fortunate to have been given this opportunity and I want to end this by thanking everyone that had made this summer an unforgettable one for myself.

“I agree that my report and accompanying pictures may be used by the DAAD in printed materials, presentations, and on websites in order to inform funding organizations, sponsors, and students about the RISE program.”