

Dear DAAD RISE Professional Team,

It is with great appreciation that I write this testimonial to you following my 3-month internship as a DAAD-RISE PRO scholar at BASF-SE. This internship was an opportunity for me to gain exposure to industrial research in an effort to determine the direction I want to pursue, academic or industrial job placement, following my graduate studies. Additionally, it allowed me to cultivate new relationships and networks. The industrial research that I conducted was interesting and I was able to gain insight into the day to day life of PhD chemists working in industry. This experience cemented my pursuit towards an industry position following my PhD work. Further, I think this internship will serve as a vital component on my resume because it differentiates me from other job seekers, gave me some vital experience, and showcases my flexibility and adaptability as a scientist.

When I arrived in Frankfurt Germany, I was met with a driving service that BASF had hired to take me to the flat I would be staying in for the duration of my internship. I found this flat on a list of accommodations that BASF provided to me before my internship. Before I received the list of accommodations by BASF I tried other means to find housing, specifically WG-GESUCHT.de, but with no success. BASF's track record with the landlords on this list of accommodations made it easy to rent without needing to meet the landlord. Another service that BASF provided for my arrival was hiring a relocation specialist to help me take with acquiring my residence permit, opening a German banking account, purchasing a semester long BAHN card for my local traveling needs, and my to take care of my deregistration previous to me leaving the country. This made the transition into my internship as well as exiting the country incredibly smooth. Once I started work at BASF, I was greeted with open arms and treated as an equal by my mentor and his team. The lab personnel were equally as inviting and extremely vital to the development and success of my project. I had some concerns due to my inability to speak German but this was not an insurmountable hurdle.

A day as an intern at BASF-SE looked something like this: I would arrive at the front doors of my building around 7:30 am and make my way to my office space. I would quickly locate to the caffeine watering hole, where I would consume some much-needed caffeine from a dual threat espresso/coffee maker. A machine that I would grow to love. I would then go into the laboratory and dive into my independent project. I have a strong analytical chemistry and assay development background so I was put on a method development project, where I was able to employ my creative and critical thinking skills. Although I cannot go into great detail about my project due to a confidentiality agreement, I can say that it pushed me intellectually and allowed me to sharpen my knowledge of experimental design.

The impression I gained from working a short time at a German company is that although they put an emphasis on progress and executing leadership directives, like all companies, they put a heavy price on work-life balance. Employees have more paid vacation days per calendar year than in the United states industrial companies I have worked in. I noticed that this enticed my German colleagues to do quite a bit of extended traveling. As someone who also loves to travel, this seemed to be quite a nice perk. I did my fair share of traveling as I relished the prospect of immersing myself in the Germany culture. I purchased a semester BAHN card that allowed me to travel by train and metro to neighboring German cities. I was determined to get out and explore Germany and it did not disappoint. From the

quaint town of Speyer to the city life scene in Mannheim, from the castle in Heidleberg to the wonderful hiking and wine festivals in Neustadt, it became a trip of a life time. On a long holiday weekend, I ventured north to Berlin, where I quickly fell in love with the atmosphere and it has become one of my favorite places that I have ever visited.

Overall, I saw this internship as an opportunity to push out of my comfort zone. I wanted to find out if I had the adaptability to be successful outside of the scope of my graduate research and familiarity of the United States. To that end, the DAAD RISE Professional scholarship permitted me to explore more than industrial research and the German culture, it gave me a chance to take a more introspective look at myself and I became grounded again in why I love research and challenge. When I arrived in Germany, I had feelings of anxiety and apprehension of the unknown journey I was embarking on. But as I was carrying my suitcase across the cobblestone sidewalk three months later as I was exiting Limburgerhof, a warm feeling of appreciation for the gifts that this internship gave me swept over me. I am extremely grateful to DAAD and BASF-SE for allowing me to be a part of this program and in the month that I have been back in the United States, I have become a spokesperson for this internship.

Sincere appreciation,
Westley S. Bauer

“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.”