

Devan Tchir

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drt859@mail.usask.ca

Report

During my Master's degree in Canada, I was determined to find a scholarship abroad to learn about research in a different cultural context and to pursue an internship. Of particular interest to me was Germany, for its renowned scientific culture and achievements. Without a doubt, Germany had been a dream destination of mine for a long time. With one Google search, I stumbled upon the DAAD Rise-professional program. Although I had lots of experience with lab work during my undergraduate degree in Neuroscience, the Rise-professional program offered an amazing opportunity to research in an industry setting.

At first, I was skeptical that my Master's in Public Health would merit a research position. After contacting DAAD personnel, I was encouraged to apply after research positions were made available for application, and I was assured that there might be areas related to my line of research. Luckily for me, an organization called fitbase which specializes in online health solutions and using technology for the betterment of workers' health, had an opening. Receiving the acceptance email was without a doubt one of the most exciting days of my life, as my dream of traveling to and researching in Germany was fulfilled.

The research experience in and of itself was an exceptional experience. My typical day consisted of arriving at 9:30 am, having lunch with colleagues at 1:00 pm, and then working into the evening. Most days I stayed late into the evening because I enjoyed working with the data so thoroughly. The team I worked with was hard working, communicative, friendly, and very interdisciplinary in their educational backgrounds. I acquired many skills from my internship position, different perspectives, and to this day continue to collaborate with my placement with data analysis. My immediate impression of German companies is their willingness to work extremely hard and the value employers have for their employees. I had lots of autonomy over my data analysis and working hours were flexible. The research opportunity helped me find my niche in research, particularly analyzing health related data sets with statistical methods, and I am very grateful for this. The climax of my trip was most certainly the scholarship meeting in Heidelberg. Meeting the people working so hard for the scholarship holders, and to meet fellow researchers in such an historic city, was an opportunity of a lifetime.

For aspiring research interns, I have a few helpful tips:

1. Apply! Even if your background is not strictly in Biology, Chemistry, Engineering, Earth Science, or Physics, it is possible to receive an internship if your education lines up with a specific placement. Do not miss out on the greatest opportunity for North American students to research abroad simply for being unsure.
2. If you plan to settle in Germany before the internship begins and want a few days to pack before coming home (ie. Your stay exceeds 90 days), a residence permit should be no problem. Obtaining a visa was too difficult with my time constraints before leaving with

exams and other deadlines, and so I applied for a residence permit upon arriving which was relatively easy (as a Canadian citizen). DAAD personnel are extremely patient and will put you in the right direction.

3. If you aren't fluent in German, make sure to bring a German-speaking friend with you when you open a bank account. The banks I visited required a German-speaker to be with me. My company was kind enough to send an employee with me during a lunch break of my first week.
4. As soon as you are accepted, start looking for housing. I used wg-gesucht.de, and luckily found housing, but it was rather difficult. There are many scammers on that website so remember not to pay until you arrive in Germany! If you can't find anywhere, try to ask your internship provider if any employees will help; mine were happy to.
5. Try to learn some German before arriving. Although a vast majority of Germans speak English, basic German is quite helpful in everyday life.
6. If you're planning on traveling, try to book your trips at least a week in advance. They will be much cheaper for you.
7. Enjoy yourself and work hard! What you put into your research and experience is what you will get out of it.

To conclude, researching in Germany was all I had hoped and more, and I am extremely confident that whoever is reading this and contemplating to apply will not regret the experience given the opportunity. My initial dream of visiting and researching in Germany has created a future dream of one day returning. I am extremely thankful to the DAAD and all its sponsors, the entire fitbase organization for accepting me with open arms, and the DAAD staff for all of their hard work.



Presenting research at Heidelberg University. July 8, 2017.

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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.