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What I gained from participating in the DAAD RISE program has greatly surpassed academic and professional benefits, as it has also provided me with an opportunity to experience another culture and grow as a global citizen. As a second year undergraduate student, opportunities to be a part of research as interesting and important as HIV vaccine development do not come so easily, and the opportunity to travel during my studies even less so. The RISE program has allowed me to learn skills beyond my years, skills that will be of great benefit to me in my future studies and work, as well as experiencing a new culture in the process.

Over the course of the 3-month internship, I have learned cell culture techniques and practices, cloning and PCR, as well as carrying out several transfections. In addition to the practical skills I learned in the lab, I have also learned a great deal of theory. My supervisor prompted me to learn all the theory behind the work I was doing, to greater understand why I was doing what I was doing. This involved a lot of reading, much of which was literature that would be necessary to learn in my third and fourth years of study at my home university. By having read these texts now, I am better equipped to succeed in my studies to come, as well as being more competent in the lab to conduct more complex experiments and continue in research at my home university. A very important aspect of research I learned through this internship was the importance of knowing how to analyse the data you collect after an experiment. As a student early in my studies, my previous focus was only on figuring out how to conduct an experiment, but not worrying about what to do with the data afterwards. In addition to the theory reading I did, I learned how to analyse data pertaining to my experiments. This is a very important aspect of research and the knowledge I acquired will help me when I conduct my own research and write my own thesis. The combination of learning theory, data analysis and practical skills I acquired through the RISE program allow me to come back to my home university as a more well-rounded and better equipped student.

In addition to the academic and professional aspect of this internship, I have experienced and enjoyed a new culture, improved my language skills and made new friends in the process. I am pursuing a minor in German studies in addition to my studies in microbiology, and through the RISE program I was able to greatly improve my language skills by being able to interact with Germans every day and learn about the German culture through them. I tried new foods and visited many museums and monuments around several German cities. I was fully immersed in German culture. I was also able to acquaint myself with other international students studying in Germany and subsequently their cultures as well. Meeting all these students from around the world has been a great experience for me, as I was able to learn of many more cultures, languages and experiences of all these students.

My experience with the DAAD RISE program has been a very positive one and I learned a great deal throughout the duration of my internship and was also able to experience a new culture in the process. This program has prompted me to look into graduate studies in Germany, as I have gained a great admiration for the country and culture, and would like to come back to Germany for my future studies.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MS', with a stylized, flowing script.

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