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Final Report DAAD RISE 2019

“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.”

Finding housing:

Housing was surprisingly easy for me. After a few weeks of intense stress since my classes were giving me a lot of work and there were other things going on and I was concerned about not finding housing, I got a response to my ads on the WG site. I was based in Solingen so I posted two ads: one for Solingen and one for Wuppertal. I got many responses and it was much easier this way instead of contacting landlords individually about their rooms. I highly recommend posting ads on the WG website for the cities you think would be good to stay in. I was able to choose the best place for me based on who contacted me and it worked perfectly. My rent cost was very reasonable and I felt very safe on the property, and my landlady even let me use their bike, their pool, and their piano during my stay!

Bank account:

I got an N26 bank account. It is an online bank and was very easy to set up with DAAD and being international.

Interesting about my research:

My research was great! This was my first official lab experience. I am a materials science and engineering major and I worked with steels. I was interested in metals in class, but didn't know how cool they were until this summer. Being able to get direct hands-on experience in a subject that I wanted to explore really helped me figure out ideas for my career after college. The best part was when my supervisor would show me what he thought was going on in the steel

samples I was working with and telling me his predictions and thoughts on why something happened in the steel. This experience reinforced my decision to have chosen my major!

Typical day:

I would get up at around 6:30, and take the bus to work (10 minute bus ride) and arrive sometime after 8 and before 8:30. I would put my stuff in the student offices and then either work on a task given to me from the previous work day or go find my supervisor. My tasks varied from using a computer to working in the lab and using chemicals. No day was the exact same, which I appreciated. I would count grain boundaries or do some literature research on the project topic on the computer. Off the computer, I may be using the scanning electron microscope, the light microscope, or the embedding and polishing machines to prepare samples. After the samples were prepared, I could use diluted sulfuric acid to etch the surface away from the steel so that I could use the microscopes to see the microstructure and figure out what was going on in the steel. I also go to perform heat treatments on some of the steel samples and use the furnaces. I would leave the lab between 4 and 4:30, depending on if I wanted to finish up something, had to clean up, or got distracted talking with someone. From there, I would go grocery shopping or head to a nearby city for a couple hours and then go home.

Highlights of stay: Carl Duisberg Language Course

The language course was by far the most helpful part of being with the DAAD organization. I did the first course in Cologne that was the largest session. My host mom and the other student with the same host mom as me were all matched perfectly! Additionally, in the class and the program I was able to meet a lot of people and make some friends that were also going to be in Germany for the summer. Even though we all went to different cities in Germany, it was great to know people for the Heidelberg conference and catch up with everyone's research and travels. Also, I was able to get travel partners and see different German cities to see the friends I had made.

Impression of Germany:

My impression of Germany is very high. I have been impressed with everything here. I appreciate that Europe as a whole is working towards addressing climate change and it was so cool to see Fridays for the Future in action! It does not exist in the US so I found it great to see something I had only read about online happening. Also, education is reasonably priced here and there are more than just 2 options for your future after high school (in the US, you basically go to college or you don't after high school). In Germany, you can go to an actual trade school and get an apprenticeship, or if you decide to go to college and stay in high school for longer you can still get a shorter degree with a practical skill. Food is very cheap but not poor quality for it being cheap. People are more relaxed and believe in taking breaks from work. Everyone at my lab, if they are working full time, get 30 days of vacation a year. This means you can actually escape work and come back refreshed and not get burnout from a job, even if you love the job. I am highly considering coming back here to live.

Recommend RISE:

Yes, I would recommend RISE to anyone who is mildly interested! This experience changed my life forever. After certain events during the school year leading up to this summer it felt like I went through the furnace (got the initial heat treatment like the steels I work with), but then this summer I felt like I changed so much for the better (I was annealed). This was my first time ever in Europe and an extended time out of the country. I had never experienced a language barrier before. Even though all Germans speak some English, there would still be some questions I would ask my landlady or my supervisor that they didn't understand the first time. I always got the answers I needed, however it was something completely different from being at home in the US. I had a great location in Germany and was able to see a lot of Germany and even Amsterdam and Paris! It was great to be in Germany for so long because I was used to the time zone and could go anywhere I wanted on a weekend!

Tips for traveling:

Plan out the long weekends quickly! They were all in the first month of me working and I wish I knew they existed because then I could have planned out trips to farther places like Spain or something. So be aware of your national German holidays and take advantage of them! Also, bring shower shoes with you to Germany so that when you travel and are staying in hostels or somewhere, it is just better. I travelled alone in Germany sometimes and felt very safe. You just have to be smart about your surroundings, the time of day, and being aware of pickpockets (I wrapped a key chain around the pocket to my backpack that always holds my wallet and never had an issue with pickpockets, even without the key chain. But do be safe). Also, never carry your passport around unless you're going to a non-EU country. Take a picture and/ or video of your passport with your passport number and name and photo visible. You don't want to risk losing your passport while in a foreign country!