

DAAD Final Report

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This summer, I was fortunate enough to carry out an internship in the city of Halle at the Leibniz Institut für Pflanzenbiochemie.

Before this internship began, I applied for the Youth Mobility visa in Canada. If possible, apply in person in Toronto. As I had done the application by mail, I had to book an appointment to extend it past 90 days, which was a little frustrating as this implied more paperwork and German bureaucracy. I was lucky that my institute had an on-site guest house for visiting students such as myself, which my supervisor helped me book. I highly suggest asking your supervisor for help for lodging and paperwork, and looking as soon as you can. On the language front, it is obviously quite difficult to be dropped into an environment with absolutely no knowledge. I strongly recommend doing what I did, which is to take a German class at my university the semester before I left. Not only did this teach me more than the two week course could have, it also gave me three school credits, and freed up two weeks to travel around Europe.

I was impressed by the funding received by German institutions, and it is nice to see that science is so valued here. The universities here seem well organized, with my lab having students from the bachelor to Post Doc level. The lab contained many Germans, but also people from around the globe, and so the working language was English. A typical day was waking up, walking two minutes to my lab, and starting at 9:00. The experiments varied greatly during my time, but usually I was able to have something growing, or in a machine while I worked on a different thing. At noon, the lab members and I would go eat at the nearby MENSA (university cafeteria). After lunch, back to the different experiments, perhaps HPLC or protein purification. I would go home usually around 6 in the evening. My work was interesting, and I had the chance to do a lot more chemistry than my molecular biology background usually allows me. This internship taught me new techniques and new equipment, and took me out of my element, which is always good for learning new things.

Another great point of this program is that it allowed me to spend my summer in Germany. As you can imagine, this is a great opportunity to broaden your horizons, discover a new culture, and try to navigate in a new language. I sincerely enjoyed my summer here, and particularly enjoyed how there is always something historic or beautiful nearby, no matter where you are. A fun activity is simply walking around any old city center and just enjoying the architecture. Furthermore, visiting so many beautiful German cities and cities in neighboring countries is a once in a lifetime opportunity. I was very impressed by the Bavarian Alps and the Köln Cathedral.

As you can imagine, I thoroughly recommend the RISE program to anybody who has any interest in science and would like to experience research on an international scale. Not only will you develop your scientific skills, you will also get to experience a new culture, and even learn a bit of a new language. I think integrating yourself into the international research community is an essential part of any scientific career, and this is the easiest way to do it at this early point. I would gladly return to Germany for study or work later in my life if an opportunity arose.

“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.”