

DAAD RISE Professional Final Report

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In my senior year as a Ph.D. student, I am continuously thinking about my professional career after graduation. In order to learn more about different career pathways and to better prepare myself for this upcoming transition, I decided to look for short-term summer research opportunities that could provide me with career insights, broaden my view and deepen my knowledge. Moreover, as an international student myself, I am always interested in experiencing different cultures, preferably in a professional setting. Germany came top to my list of countries that I would like to explore, not only for its renowned world-class research institutes (such as Max Planck, etc.), large chemical and pharmaceutical companies (such as BASF, Merck, etc.), but also its overall research environment, specifically the huge efforts in encouraging technology innovations and the remarkable achievements in the fields of science and engineering. Therefore, I decided to apply for the DAAD RISE Professional internship program for the summer 2019.

I was successfully placed on an internship position with QuoData, a small information technology company with offices in Berlin and Dresden. My project was conducted in its biotechnology division, focusing on optimizing one of the company's commercialized product – a yeast cell based testing kit for estrogenic substance screening – to improve its performance and boost its market application. Even without the knowledge of German, I was warmly welcomed by my colleagues on my first day at the company. I was surprised to find out that one of the current employees was a previous DAAD RISE intern and now worked as a research scientist here. My supervisor was the lab manager of this small bio-lab, and he was knowledgeable and experienced in the field of biotechnology and environmental sciences.

My typical day at the company usually starts at around 9am. My supervisor would check-in with me daily with the experiments or tasks that I was planning to do. During the lunch break, almost everyone in the company would go upstairs in the kitchenette to have lunch and chat together, and it was the time for my daily "German listening practice class". I usually finish my experiments by 3pm and then come back to the office to do data analysis and report back to my supervisor about the experimental results. These day-to-day check-in and check-out discussions were very different from what I experienced in graduate school, and I really liked this as they were very informative and effective. My supervisor and I had lots of short and long discussions on this project, where he helped me a lot in this new field that I have limited knowledge of. I usually leave the company at 5pm, head over to gym and then back home to spend the rest of the day.

My internship was in the Dresden office, and I really loved this beautiful, green, and dynamic city. Dresden is a main tourist destination in Germany where hundreds of thousands of people come to visit the old historical town, go on a boat tour on the Elbe River or go hiking at the Saxon Switzerland Park near the border with Czech the Republic. The city of Dresden has a convenient public transportation system, great infrastructure, and there is no problem to find whatever you want to buy for your daily needs within a walkable distance. I stayed in a WG with a local student and she gave me plenty of tips to help me get through this cultural transit. One thing to mention here in Germany is the bakeries, where

you could find (or smell, to be more precise) everywhere. There are all different types of sandwiches and cakes that I couldn't name, but trust me, they all tasted insanely good. During the weekends, I usually go to the concerts (student tickets are pretty affordable), wander in the old town, run by the Elbe River or go hiking with my friends.

Moreover, during my stay here, I also had the chance to travel around to cities as Munich, Leipzig, Berlin, etc., and I travelled to Prague for a weekend getaway on my own. It was a brand-new experience for me as a solo-traveler, and I enjoyed all the different cultures that the cities bring and the nicety of the people, always willing to help. One of the best travel experiences was the DAAD scholars' meeting in Heidelberg. There, I met with other scholarship holders from the USA, Great Britain and Ireland. During the conference, we visited the Heidelberg University, the famous old Castle, and had a great time at BASF headquarter in Ludwigshafen. I was really motivated to hear everyone's grad school story and was surprised to find out that we were working on so many different projects in the fields of science and engineering but eventually all to bring good to the world we live in.

The DAAD RISE Professional internship provided me with the platform where I was able to learn new skills and techniques, receive first-hand information and insider views on the industry that I would be interested in, and make lots of connections would be helpful in my professional career. This internship was so unique and unforgettable for me, and I was grateful to have such a great experience.

I agree that my report and accompanying pictures are used by the DAAD in printed materials, presentations and on the website in order to inform funding organizations, sponsors, and students about the RISE professional program.