

Braunschweig, Germany

Ella Spurlock

Program: Chemistry Research in Germany - Summer 2019

Major: Chemistry

Earning the Career Development Badge:



Before Germany, I always pictured lab mates having an exclusively academic relationship, but my German colleagues were close in a more personal way. Formal academic communication was reserved for during lab work and our weekly group meeting. Besides those few circumstances, my colleagues strove

to have fun and bond as a group. Some examples of this include how each workday we all went to lunch together. We also took a day trip one weekend to a local village and the Harz Mountains. Because of this badge, I became aware of how strengthening the bonds between my colleagues and I contributed to an overall increase in mood and greater efficiency at work compared to what I have heard about in other labs. This knowledge will benefit me through my academic and professional career.

Earning the Research Experience Badge:



I worked in a graduate biophysical lab in Germany this summer. My project looked at protein misfolding and aggregation that could lead to neurodegenerative diseases such as ALS and Alzheimer's. Using Förster resonance energy transfer (FRET) and fast relaxation imaging (FRFI), we measured the folding kinetics of the SOD1 protein with the investigated drug to determine its effects on the protein's stability. My supervisor guided me through the procedures and then allowed me to take the reins once I got the hang of my measurements. I truly enjoyed the nature of my research and the independence I was granted for it.

Transferable Skills:



One transferrable skill that I gained while abroad is the ability to communicate more effectively. Since I am not fluent in German, I encountered a range of language barriers. A few situations involved me using a term that one of my colleagues didn't know, or the cashier at REWE not speaking fluent English. In both situations, I had to become more aware of my communication, possibly phrasing myself differently than normal or interpreting body language to aid in my understanding. People can become very lackadaisical while speaking their mother tongue, myself included, so I was glad to gain a greater awareness of how I speak and present myself, which I now apply to my personal and professional life.



“Not only did studying abroad shift my perspective on the world, but it also shifted my perspective on myself and my role in life. It showed me that I have the capability to do anything and everything that I want to do; I do not have to choose or settle for less.”