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Cameron Feriante Earns Summer Chemistry Internship in South Carolina

October 13, 2014

Cameron Feriante (Chemistry, '15) spent ten weeks this past summer on an internship he won through the Society for Chemical Industry (SCI) America International Group and the American Chemical Society. This opportunity placed Feriante with Milliken & Company in Spartanburg, South Carolina, a company that develops synthetic flooring, flame resistant fabrics, and infrastructure. He also received a stipend, housing, and funding for travel.



Cameron Feriante (left) with Dr. Hans Schanz

Feriante's main research task involved preliminary work with room-temperature silicone elastomer composites. Silicone composites are a combination of materials that make fabrics and textiles lighter and more durable. Even though he had no prior experience in this field, he was able to quickly acclimate to a new research environment. "Learning a different technique and applying it to a problem is something the honors program taught me. There was more self-direction than the average classroom, but I applied the data towards the goal of problem solving," Feriante said.

The internship gave Feriante a chance to work with top professionals and students in his field. "I worked with phenomenal minds to seek to promote creativity. It was incredible," Feriante said.

The learning experience in the internship built on knowledge he gained in Georgia Southern's classrooms and labs. "The summer internship overlapped well with my general chemistry classes, though my Introduction to Polymer Materials class did prove most useful. The internship was very educational," Feriante said. "It let me meet influential people and led me to a second internship this semester. It was an amazing opportunity."

Feriante is now on a second internship also though Milliken but at a local King America Finish plant. "The internship gave me a chance to network and meet influential people. Now I have a second opportunity that overlaps with my Survey of Industrial Chemistry class," Feriante said.

Feriante also received an Honorable Mention from the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship for his research in the treatment of traumatic brain injuries. His research is developing into his honors thesis. The experiences of research, in developing a thesis, and in the honors classrooms helped Feriante assemble competitive applications for all these experiences. "The honors program helped me with advice on my Goldwater application, and that process of revising and editing also applied to the application I developed for my internship," Feriante added.

After graduation, Feriante intends to continue his studies in graduate school to work with polymers or organic chemistry. He is currently applying to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Northwestern University.

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Ebony Pullen Participates in Biochemistry Summer Research Experience

October 13, 2014

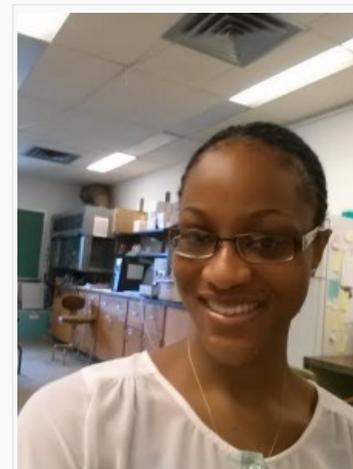
Ebony Pullen spent her summer in a biochemistry research experience at the University of Cincinnati and came away with new knowledge and research that is being readied for publication.

Pullen (Chemistry, '16) worked closely with her mentor Dr. Edward Merino to study the biological and kinetic effects of molecules and DNA. This research, "The Mechanistic and Kinetic Studies of a New ROS-Activated Compound," is currently in manuscript-development. "I'll co-author an article along with my mentor. I'm honored to be able to work with Dr. Merino and have my name on our work," Pullen said. This summer research experience was fully funded by the National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates and included room and board and housing.

"The honors program lead me to do research I wouldn't have done without it. Because of the program, I got to spend a fun summer working with my mentor and graduate students while building my resume," Pullen said.

At Georgia Southern University, Pullen is a member of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE). During her internship, Pullen had the opportunity to meet the organization's national leader and network with fellow members. Through this connection, Pullen was invited to present her research last month at the NOBCChE conference in New Orleans. "This was a wonderful opportunity for professional development and networking," Pullen said.

After graduation, Pullen intends to attend medical school and focus her research on tumors. "The Georgia Southern Honors Program prepared me for my future as an obstetrician," Pullen said. "I couldn't be more excited for the connections it provided me."



Ebony Pullen

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From the Deep South to the Far East: A Year Abroad in Nisshin, Japan

October 13, 2014



Nicole Puckett in Japan, learning about traditional tea ceremony

Leaving home to attend college is a challenging endeavor for many students. Leaving the country to study abroad for a full year raises the challenge to a different level altogether. Students have to face the immersion in a new language and culture coupled with a new way of seeing and being seen. Nicole Puckett (International Studies, '15) experienced all of that as she spent a year abroad in Japan.

Puckett, supported by a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, spent last year enrolled at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies in Nisshin, Japan. During her year abroad, she was able to work on her language skills—both in writing and speaking, take courses in international law, and volunteer at an orphanage.

Puckett said one of the best parts about the exchange program was how her Japanese university offered integrated courses. “It was fantastic to engage with Japanese students and learn more about their society while getting class credits,” she said.

Puckett was also able to explore the country. She visited several shrines, saw ethnic dances, explored Tokyo and participated in *sadō*, a Japanese tea ceremony.

Puckett believes the University Honors Program prepared her for experiences on the trip by developing her global perspective and sense of curiosity through coursework and experiential learning. “I wanted to have an open mind about Japan. I didn’t want to go in with too many generalizations,” Puckett said. Maintaining a sense of openness helped Puckett receive more out of the experience. “Everyone was friendly. They were all willing to answer my questions and help me find my way.”

As part of her obligation to the Gilman Scholarship, Puckett must engage in a “Follow-on Project” to promote study abroad among college and high school students who may think that study abroad is not for them or is financially out of reach. Puckett plans to teach a section of Japanese history in her hometown high school in the hopes of encouraging more students to consider travelling to Japan and other countries. She wants to instill that same sense of curiosity and a global perspective that motivated her to travel to Japan.

“The Georgia curriculum has removed Geography from classrooms. It’s a necessary skill for understanding people and yourself. I feel like Geography is an important skill for all students,” Puckett said.

“Learning a foreign language is the best way to become a global participant. I’m prepared to take on the world now,” Puckett said. “I would recommend this exchange program to anyone.”

Her time in Japan was only the start of her travels abroad. After she graduates, Puckett intends to go to graduate school for International Affairs, and hopes to have more international travel in her immediate future. “I’d like to go to Morocco or Eastern Europe next,” she said.

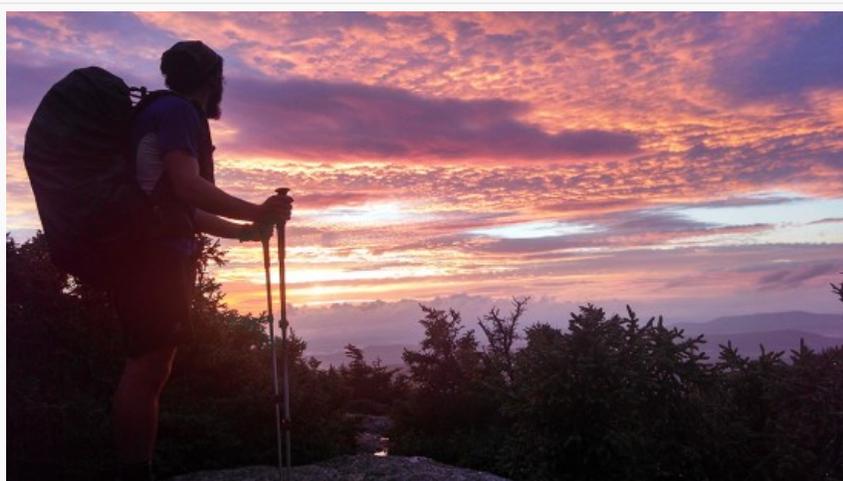
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Justin Yun completes the Appalachian Trail

October 13, 2014



Justin Yun on the Appalachian Trail in the Great Smoky Mountains

Some students might see college as a mountain to climb with a degree at the summit. Justin Yun, however, found that the path is not always straight and that the journey might be just as important. Last March, Yun (Outdoor Recreation, '16) began a six month excursion hiking the Appalachian Trail thinking as much about the direction of the trail as he did the direction of his education and his recent change in major from chemistry to outdoor recreation. "If you don't challenge yourself, you're never going to know where you can go. This trip was a fresh start," Yun said.

The trail is about 2,000 miles long and passes through fourteen states. Yun began at the trail's southernmost point at Springer Mountain in Georgia and worked his way north to the end at Maine's Mount Katahdin. "I met the most interesting people I have ever met in my entire life," Yun said. "People came from California, Oregon, and even abroad. I never would have met them without this experience."

On the trail, Yun had some strange encounters. He saw a black bear up close and had his first experience with moose, very unpredictable animals in the wild. But Yun says the worst part was the bugs: "It was blackflies season, and they can bite through your clothes. It's very painful."

Yun encountered what is deemed, 'trail magic'—charity for hikers who might need a little pick-me-up. This can come in the form food left for hikers, such as snacks or cold beverages, and even in the form of people, 'trail angels,' who will take hikers into their home and offer shelter for a night or two. "Those bits of trail magic are a nice treat, and people on the trail aren't picky. We eat a lot of everything, so it's really great to see people go out of their way to help a complete stranger," Yun said.



Justin Yun



Justin Yun

Yun hiked to Clingman's Dome in the Smoky Mountains, the highest point of the trail. "The hikers have a running joke, they say 'It's all downhill from here,' but it really isn't." From there, he worked his way through the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Shenandoah National Parks in Virginia, where Harper's Ferry, the halfway point of the trail, is located. "This trip gave me the drive to do what I want to do. Once you get to the halfway point, you put your name in a book along with all the other hikers. It's a great feeling of accomplishment," Yun said.

Though hiking is adventurous, it is often dangerous. Yun had to research the correct techniques for water filtration and storage. However, there were times when the problem was not a lack of water, but too much of it. Yun hiked through Mount Washington, known for having the highest wind speed ever recorded by man. "Mt. Washington wasn't that bad when I got there, but there were times when I was trekking through mud up to my knees. Sometimes it would rain so hard we were drenched for hours before we came across a shelter," Yun said.

Yun's trip became about more than just hiking. "The trail gives you real world experiences, and anyone of any age can do it." And out of the experience came some direction for his course of study and for future hikes. He is

planning the Pacific Coast Trail for after graduation.

Still, Yun emphasized that the best part of the expedition was the entire experience: "The good and the bad together make the whole experience so worth it. If you don't challenge yourself with the bad, then you're never going to know if you could have done it. I did, and anyone can overcome those challenges."

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Kayla Smith's APPROach to the Medical Field

October 13, 2014

Kayla Smith's summer internship with Emory University reaffirmed her passions for the medical field and put her on the right track for medical school.

Smith (Biology, '15) interned with Dr. Rachel Patzer at Emory University School of Medicine. Dr. Patzer specializes in kidney transplants, and her team developed an application called, "Choose Kidney." Smith worked to train nephrologists—kidney doctors—in how the app worked. The app, which was based on the experiences of thousands of patients, was tested by Smith for feasibility and effectiveness.

"I was amazed at the number of patients with different issues and stories. I was able to make personal connections with people and got to know them individually—something you can't do in a laboratory," Smith said.

*Kayla Smith*

One outcome Smith discovered was that the application was not the best tool to use with everyone. "Working with different patients in different scenarios helped show that this app could supplement a doctor's diagnostic, but not be the sole diagnostic tool," Smith said.

Smith also participated in a community study called the "Radiant Study" on dialysis patients. "There is a lack of knowledge about dialysis in the community, and this internship opened my eyes to a lack of public knowledge," Smith said.

"This internship taught me so much more about myself and science. It really was an internship that bridged lab work and the public," Smith said.

"The University Honors Program has played a pivotal role in grooming me for the sciences. It has really helped me test my boundaries and gave me the background to conquer difficult techniques," Smith said. Back at Georgia Southern, Smith continues to work with her mentor Dr. Vinoth Sittaramane in the Department of Biology.

After graduation, Smith wants to attend Emory University in the MD/PhD program. "My internship concreted my desire to work with the public. Now that I have ties to Emory, I can't wait for graduate school."

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Kori Williams Participates in Ten-Week Neuroscience Summer Research Experience

October 13, 2014

*Kori Williams in the lab*

Kori Williams never believed she would engage with cutting-edge laboratory technologies as an undergraduate. In a ten-week summer research experience for undergraduates at the University of Vermont, Williams worked in the field of neuroscience, specializing in proteins and eye development.

Throughout the experience, Williams worked with developmental proteins and cells. "Working in the lab with new techniques and technologies was something I could bring back to Southern. We have begun to incorporate them into the labs on campus," Williams said.

Williams learned how to apply classroom concepts to real life problems during the research experience at UV. "The brain is fascinating; we worked with more specific proteins. It's the experience that you get that really makes a difference," Williams added.

Williams believes her research experience shaped her into a more culturally perceptive student. She saw this experience in another institution as a chance to examine herself and her goals for the future. "I worked in the field with researchers from diverse backgrounds from all over the United States who helped cultivate my passions," Williams said.

The research experience provided Williams with the skills for advancement in the future. She wrote papers, presented posters, and participated in workshops about graduate school. Williams' research experience was funded through a National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU). Williams received a stipend of \$5,000, on-campus housing, and a supplement for lab supplies. "I could not have participated without the funding. The experience you receive from an internship is completely different than in the classroom," Williams said.

The University Honors Program encouraged Williams to seek more opportunities in research. "The honors program is encouraging if you want to strive to do more. Most students don't want to do it on their own, but the program makes it easy to do undergraduate research," Williams said.

After graduation, Williams will attend graduate school to study in the field of neurodevelopment, with a focus on disorders like Autism. "My advice is to go somewhere you have never been. You'll never know where you want to go unless you try," Williams said.

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