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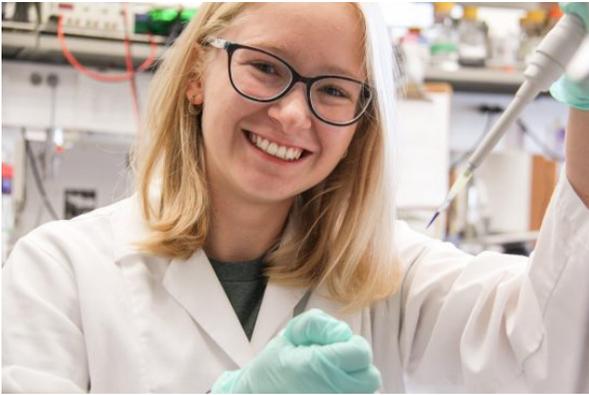
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# Cross-Cultural Experiences in Cancer Research

October 9, 2019

With graduate school application deadlines approaching quickly, Abigail McNamee (Biochemistry '20) had a tough decision to make about how to spend her final undergraduate summer. Her desire to study abroad and experience another culture was matched by her academic need for research experience. Thanks to the dedication of her professors and the participants in her Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program, McNamee was able to achieve both of these goals while also fulfilling all of her desires for worthwhile summer experiences.



McNamee in the lab

McNamee spent her summer in the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department in the Georgia Cancer Center building of Augusta University researching the effects of phosphodiesterase inhibitors on c-GMP signaling and colon cancer cell proliferation *in vitro*. “My role in the project was to investigate whether the colon cancer cells themselves were being affected by the drugs we were studying or if the initiation process of colon cancer was being affected,” McNamee explained. In doing this research, McNamee enjoyed being exposed to more biomedical-focused research and learning about a vast array of research topics in the biomedical field

ranging from cancer to eye diseases.

“I wanted to pursue research over the summer because I wanted to continue to enhance my research skills and hopefully prepare myself for graduate school,” McNamee said. Her choice to participate in research at another university was also motivated by her desire to attend graduate school. “I wanted the chance to see what other universities might have to offer. Since I am in the process of looking for graduate programs, I thought that an REU at a potential graduate school option would be an excellent way for me to see if the school would be a good fit and what the research opportunities were there.”

While McNamee was initially disappointed in the impact this had on her ability to study abroad, she soon realized that her time spent in Augusta could contain just as many unique cultural experiences. “In my program, there were five international students, and I learned a lot about them and their cultures. So in essence, I still got the benefits that I was looking for from a study abroad and also got the research experience that was the most important.”

Due to their vigorous daily work schedules, the members of the research team spent most of their free time getting to know more about one another and their different cultures during meals. “Since the international students didn’t have cars, I often drove with them to go grocery shopping or out to eat,” McNamee recalled. “These trips actually proved to be a wonderful time for us to talk about their home countries and the differences between how they lived there compared to in America.” McNamee was even able to try some traditional Nepali food prepared by one of her fellow researchers. “Anush, one of the Nepali students, often cooked for himself and would share what he had made with me. I had never tried Nepali cuisine before, but after this, I was convinced I had found my new favorite type of food!”

McNamee’s REU was a successful experience that increased her self confidence and provided further clarity for her career path. “I am more confident than ever that I wish to pursue a career in research, specifically in

the biomedical or a similarly health-related field of study,” McNamee said. “Through this experience, I got a glimpse of what a full-time career in research could look like.”

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