GOLD AWARD

Maria Senf, psychology major, interned with the University of Chicago as a research assistant. In describing her experience, Maria wrote, “My internship at the University of Chicago opened my eyes for my future career in industrial organizational psychology. This experience made it possible for me to combine my research interest in Occupational Health Psychology and my academic studies in Psychology. I conducted psychological research in Germany with Dr. Boaz Keysar from the University of Chicago. By conducting research with 124 test subjects in a time period of three weeks, I learned how to run a study independently and in a short time frame. The statistical knowledge as well as the quantitative and qualitative research skills that I have learned have given me fundamental skills to succeed in my academic studies and prepared me well for my future work.”

Dr. Boaz Keysar, University of Chicago, praised Maria’s internship with the following words: “Maria began working with us on a research project in Germany looking at how using a foreign language affects decision making. She was involved in every step of the research process from designing the materials to data collection and analysis. Maria is an exceptionally reliable and motivated individual who has made a significant contribution to our project.”

Larissa Barber, Assistant Professor, NIU Department of Psychology, commented on Maria’s academic work: “One thing that sets Maria apart is her poise and maturity. Maria is a quick and easy learner and shows a lot of self-initiative in driving her project and producing good work independently. In her research work with me, she has been eager to tackle tasks that undergraduate students are hesitant to attempt.”

SILVER AWARD

Matthew Schnizlein, biological sciences major, completed an Undergraduate Research Internship with the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas. In describing his experience, Matt said, “I was able to engage in cutting edge research in virology and biomedical science. The lab in which I worked specialized in Alphaviruses, which are mosquito-transmitted viruses that infect humans and cause symptoms ranging from severe, debilitating arthritis to encephalitis. Previous research in the lab suggested that certain compounds would inhibit viral replication. My project investigated whether the effectiveness of those compounds was limited to one virus or whether it was effective across the entire Alphavirus group. My microbiology experience was rather limited at the start of the internship. However, after the internship, my understanding has expanded, inspiring greater interest in the field of microbiology.”

Rose Langsjoen, PhD Candidate, University of Texas Medical Branch, Institute for Translational Science, Department of Pathology, speaks highly of Matt, saying, “Eight weeks are going to complete a research project. Students present their work at the Undergraduate Research Symposium. Matt was awarded the “Best Poster in Infectious Disease” by the Institute of Human Infection and Immunity here at UTMB. His data has been reported in a grant submission and is expected to be published within the next year. Matt is highly qualified in every aspect, including academic prowess, dedication to learning, and the maturity to function effectively in a group setting.”

R. Meganathan, Distinguished Research Professor, NIU Department of Biological Sciences, commented on Matt’s academic work: “Matt performed exceptionally well on every examination. His scores were 20% more than any other student. Matt is exceptionally competent.”

BRONZE AWARD

William Avila, history major, completed an internship with Flagg Township Museum, in Rochelle, Illinois. In describing his experience, William said, “As a museum studies student, interning at the Flagg Township Museum not only constitutes the final phase of my journey toward earning a graduate certificate, it represents an invaluable opportunity to gain hands-on instruction and practical, real-world experience in a small, local history museum. Prospective museum employers are demanding that entry-level staffers possess extensive experience before they are even considered for a position. Working at a museum dedicated to interpreting and sharing the community history of Flagg Township hones my talents as a local historian. Every bit of effort I applied toward this internship not only moves me that much closer to my academic goals, it also helps build my professional resume.”

Kathy Johnson, Director, Flagg Township Museum, spoke highly of William: “William has been a real asset to the Museum. He contributes to planning discussions as well as debriefings after events. He is doing valuable work, and we look forward to his return to continue working on our digitization project.”

Stanley Arnold, Assistant Professor, NIU Department of History, commented on William’s academic work: “In all of his academic work, William has constantly exceeded expectations. His intellectual range has also had an impact on my classes. While his academic achievements are superlative, William’s work outside the classroom deserves special attention. He exemplifies NIU’s commitment to Engaged Learning. William is firmly grounded in academic learning and seeks to disseminate and apply his knowledge to the wider community.”