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Fall 2018, Students Thank Donors for Making Their International Experience Possible

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UNH Global

Students Thank Donors for Making Their International Experience Possible

Georgeann Murphy, International Coordinator, Hamel Center for Undergraduate Research

Tuesday, October 23, 2018

Thanksgiving comes early to the Hamel Center for Undergraduate Research (HCUR) each year when our senior undergraduate researchers, newly returned from their summers abroad, send their thanks to the generous donors who funded their work. One hundred percent of the funding for the HCUR's international research awards (up to covering the full expenses for a summer of research abroad) comes from donor gifts. While all the Center's lucky recipients express thanks to their benefactors, the intensity of the research experience informs the gratitude of students, who travel abroad to research topics as disparate as the physics of dark matter, the thawing of arctic ponds, and the mysteries of a Thoroughbred's heart. Here, with permission, are some highlights from their letters to their donors--saying "thank you" by sharing their excitement, learning, and future plans with those who made their research abroad possible.



Ian Lichtenstein, biomedical science major, spent his summer studying transfusion practices in Ghana, where malaria rates are high and cultural differences “exciting and enriching.” Waking to the sounds of goats and roosters each morning and eating hand foods each meal with his hospitable new extended family left a big impression: “Throughout my travels, I can say that . . . what has stuck with

Ian Lichtenstein (center) with young friends in Ghana me were the engaging meals and discussions I had . . . a uniquely elevating cultural experience.”

Both the International Research Opportunities Program (IROP) and Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) Abroad grant programs celebrate such cultural immersion just as much as the research students conduct. Emma Faddoul, veterinary sciences major researching chimpanzee behavior in Zambia, thanked her donors for affording her the chance “to see a wild Black Mamba, play with a baby lion, and even make a chimpanzee intensive care unit for a chimp that went into a coma,” adding that because of her academic schedule and finances, such an experience would have been impossible without donor help. “I don’t think I could ever have better moments than I did this summer.”

Students are also grateful for the leg up on their future careers. Erin Driscoll hopes to become an audio engineer, as her combination of applied math and piano performance majors would suggest. Her time in Leuven, Belgium at the Katholieke Universiteit has given her “a much more concrete vision for my future,” leaving her “even more excited about my academic path than ever before.” Leuven also delighted Erin with its bicycle culture: “Biking around Leuven not only made me feel connected to my habits at home, but also excited that maybe cycling can have more prevalence at home in the U.S., thus decreasing environmental impact.”



Emma Faddoul in Zambia taking notes on chimps

Like Erin, environmental science major Katie Bennett affirmed her career path, in her case by working above the Arctic Circle in Sweden: “I am incredibly grateful for this experience because it allowed me to really see what pursuing scientific research looks like in my field. I have fallen in love with the idea of doing field work for environmental science and will now be applying to graduate programs to help me to continue to pursue this.”

It's been said that nothing you do for a child is ever wasted. Donors give some of UNH's best, brightest, and most adventurous undergraduates the defining experience of their young lives. For this, all of us who help and admire these fine young folks are truly grateful.

For more about IROP and SURF researchers and their benefactors, please visit the Hamel Center website. (<https://www.unh.edu/undergrad-research/>)

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