

Borinqueña 101: Summer Internships? Contact your Favorite Scientist!

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Submitted by [Marissa Morales Rodriguez](#) [2] on 3 February 2014 - 12:10am



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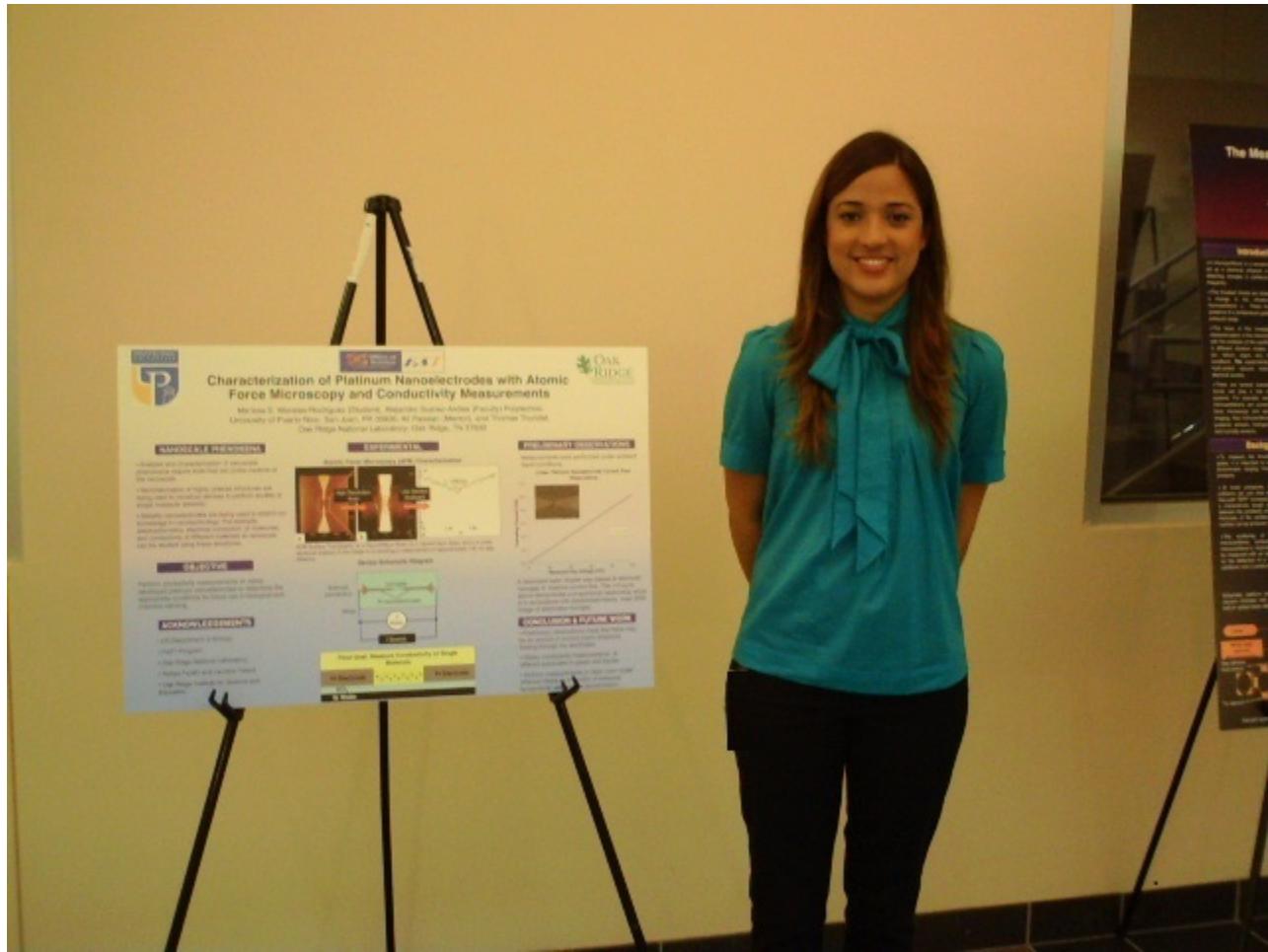
During my summer internship at Oregon in 2005

Borinqueña emphasizes the contribution of Puerto Rican and Hispanic women in science and technology and provides a space to discuss topics of interest about the empowerment of women. In “Borinqueña 101” we will share experiences and advice that will be useful in your future career in science.

Internships are the bridge to a job opportunity. They provide relevant experience to your career, a boost to your resume and are of great help when is time to go after a job. What to do if the internships application deadlines has already passed? Well... it is not all over. Contrary to the popular belief scientists are social creatures, most of them. This means that we are happy to answer questions about our experiences, research and interests, and especially to help young talent. You can just talk to them directly and express your interest in working with them. Not to say that you will not have to sit and fill the longest application you will ever see, let's face it (determination is key here) but there are shortcuts or tips to increase your chances to be selected and get the internship experience.

Once you fill an internship application, most likely it will go to a pool of applicants where mentors select the candidate based on their interests and experiences. Ah! Experiences, some will say what if I don't have any experience? This is where you are wrong. Everybody have experience in something. Think about how you handle school projects, do you end up being the leader? Are you the one who gets everybody organized? Are you the one who provide the ideas? All this can be translated in your resume to “Take leadership of projects” or “demonstrate leadership skills to...” or “organize and plan projects for...” and “demonstrate creativity to...” as examples.

As an undergrad student you have the luxury to sit back and ask yourself, where do I want to work? In what company and topic I would like to work on? Once you have narrow down your research or work interests everything becomes easy. It is very important, vital I must say, to do an extensive research online about the chosen topic. Who's on top of that research?, scientists and institutions? And what are they doing in terms of results and latest publications? Also it can be helpful to research the company or individuals personal interests to reference them in your communications to relate to them at a most personal level. Look them up on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, nowadays information is very accessible. Once that's done you have enough information to craft an email expressing your interest for his/her research and why you are the top candidate for the job. Regardless if the time to apply for internships have passed or if you submitted your application on time this is critical to increase your chances to be selected.



During my summer internship experience (2009) at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, where I work today.

Keep your communications short and straight to the point, one paragraph up to ten sentences for example. Long emails are distracting and often deleted. Express your interest in the email subject. Write something that will grab his/her attention. Always be yourself. Here is an example to use as a guide that can help you craft that email that will start and propel your career.

Dear Dr. ...

My name is... and I'm currently enrolled in the... (your major) program at the...(your Department) from the University of ...I am very interested in your work specifically... (demonstrate that you've been reading and researching about it. Promote conversation by asking a question). My research interests are....I have experience in...(detail your research experience if any and if not remember to showcase your skills and how they can be relevant to his/her job. Don't be shy express your awesomeness). When I was looking for information about you and the company/institution I noticed your... (Volunteer work, sports fan, cars, etc. Here you can explain your similar interests if any. DO NOT say anything that you do not mean. If you have nothing in common but work, then just focus on work). I look forward to hearing from you soon, please find my contact information below.

Best Regards,

Your name

Department of...

University of...

info@email.com [3]

123-456-7890

Once you click that send button the waiting game begins. You might not get an instant reply, it can take days even weeks/months. After a considerable amount of time has passed, maybe a few weeks, and still no replies then you have to follow up. This shows your interest, motivation, and determination. Always be courteous and mindful of people's time it is all about establishing a relationship. When you receive a reply, be ready and ask to speak briefly on the phone. The more they know about you the better it is. Prior to the conversation consult with someone at the University and have a few questions ready. For example, more questions about her/his current research and research interests, lifestyle of the location, how many researchers are in the group and what they do, materials you can read prior to start the appointment, for example.

It is possible that still, after all the work you put into it, you might not get selected for an internship the current year. But by talking to researchers and expressing interest in their work you have gained contacts that can potentially place you at the top of the candidate's list for the next opportunity available. Keep in mind that these are suggestions to help you increase your network and meet contacts that can be important to achieve your career goals and can be applied to any professional field. It is all about establishing relationships with professionals that can potentially help you in the near or far future. I personally have seen how approaching directly the researchers and participating of research internships can get you a job, I am one of them. I started my career as a summer intern and by the end of my appointment I was offered a job. Always dream big, this means to aim for the impossible and you will be surprised of what you can achieve., and you Borinqueña, are a strong woman!

At CienciaPR the Borinqueñas are here to help you. Please contribute with comments or questions on this essay. We want to hear your voice! You can follow Marissa at twitter @marissaemorales

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