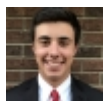


Research, Friends, and a Beautiful Island ^[1]

Submitted by [Aaron Henson](#) ^[2] on 30 June 2017 - 12:10pm



^[2]



My name is Aaron Henson. I am a Junior in Materials Science and Engineering at North Carolina State University. This summer I have been given the opportunity to participate in the Research Experience for Undergraduates in Reconfigurable and Multifunctional Soft Materials at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez. My research is focused on the use of MgO nanoparticles to efficiently disinfect water due to the bactericidal effect that MgO nanoparticles have on *E. Coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Staphylococcus Aureus*. I have been in Puerto Rico for a month now. Though one month is a very short amount of time, the program has already greatly impacted my professionalism and attitude towards research.

I have some minor experience in the art of research due to a part-time job I have back at NCSU researching under one of my professors. However, being able to experience full-time research has greatly changed my conception of what research truly is. Research, unlike I previously believed, is an extremely collaborative effort. I had not fully understood the necessity of having other researchers involved in your project. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than the one where they sprang up."

Throughout the short duration of time I have been here in Puerto Rico I have come to realize the validity of this statement. Many times in research, a researcher encounters a problem or situation that is completely unpredicted and unexpected. Having a community of researchers around you to help you overcome the barriers that arise during research is invaluable. I have also learned that it is a two-way street. Not only do you receive help from the community but it is also an opportunity to serve others and help them as well.

Another way that this summer has had an impact on my professionalism is through learning how to engage and research aside people who represent a different cultural region and linguistic background. My mentor, Ana, is from Cali, Columbia. Neither of us are completely fluent in each other's language, yet we find ways to communicate despite the differences. It has been a rich experience discovering the differences in our cultures and languages as we both work towards our research goals. I imagine that many times throughout my career as a researcher I will encounter people of very different backgrounds than myself. This summer is teaching me how to effectively communicate personally with people much different from myself and how to symbiotically work together to achieve goals.

On a more personal note, I have developed a passion for research that addresses humanitarian problems. Though research in new technology for consumerist products does greatly benefit society, I would rather use my time researching to help those who cannot help themselves. My project for this summer is a perfect example of such a project. The earth suffers a massive water crisis in which millions die every year due to the inability to access a clean water source. The goal of my project is to efficiently disinfect water that is contaminated with *E. Coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Staphylococcus Aureus*. These microbes are usually present in very dirty water and many times can result in death if untreated. My deepest passion for my life is to leave an impact on others. I can think of no better avenue to achieve my goal than to research things that have the potential to change someone's life. This program has already taught and continues to teach me in many different ways, both professional and personal. I have loved every minute of it thus far and am greatly anticipating what the next 6 weeks holds for me and my research.

Source URL:<https://www.cienciapr.org/en/blogs/soft-matter/research-friends-and-beautiful-island?language=en>

Links

[1] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/blogs/soft-matter/research-friends-and-beautiful-island?language=en> [2] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/user/aaronhenson56?language=en>