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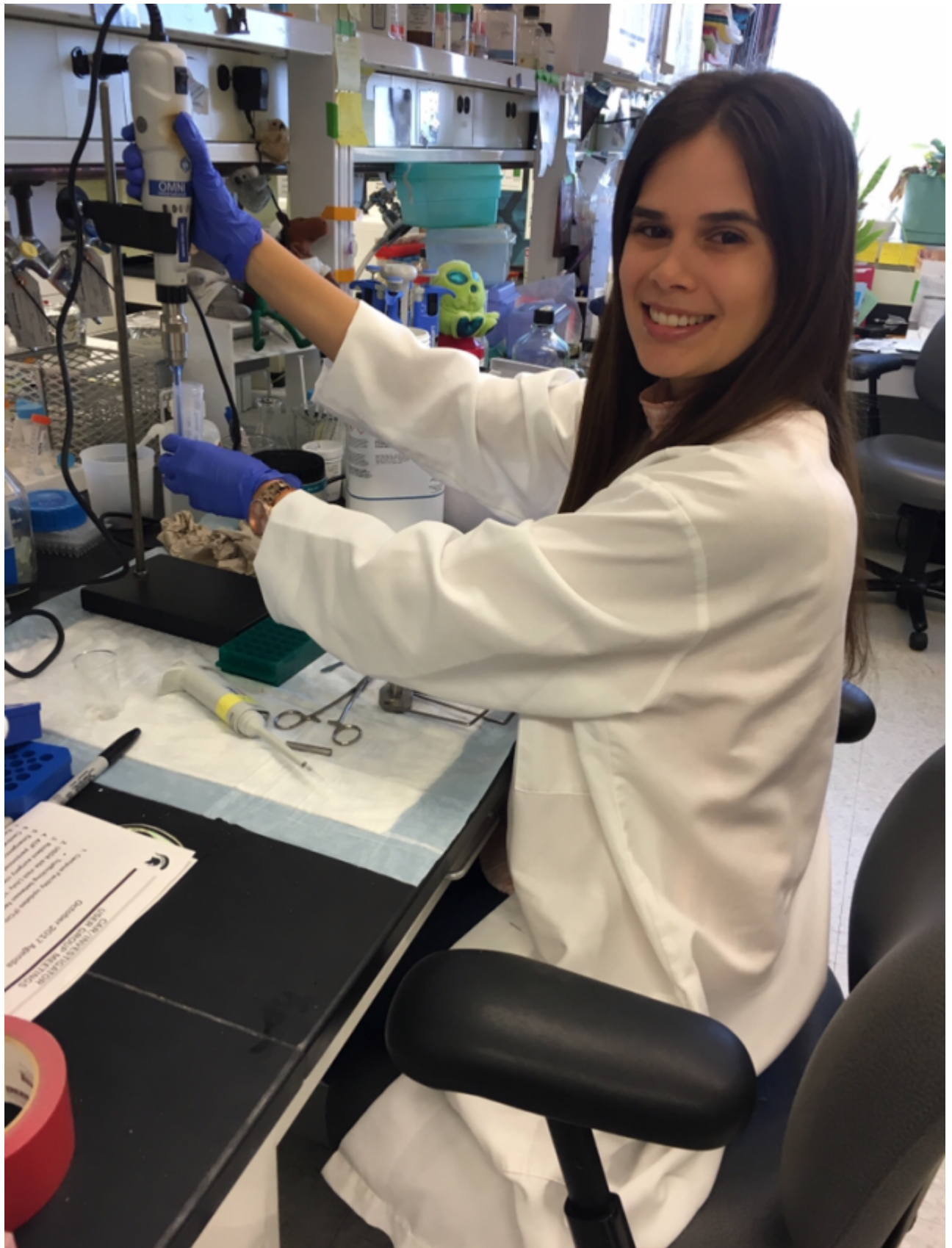
# The email that changed my life <sup>[1]</sup>

Submitted by [Naiomy D Rios Arce](#) <sup>[2]</sup> on 9 January 2018 - 2:30pm



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I remember that moment as it was yesterday. I was seating in the living room with my family chatting about school and our plans for the summer. At that time, I wasn't sure about my plans. I was thinking of taking some free time or maybe one summer class. However, I am not the kind of person that always has a plan, so I was just waiting to see what the summer had to offer, but then something unexpected happened! I received a notification on my phone about a summer research program that I had applied a couple of months back. A lot of emotions came through my mind, so I ran to my room to read the email:

*"Congratulations you have been accepted to participate in our Summer Research Program. Please, respond to us by next week to accept or decline our offer."*

What? How is this possible? Why did they choose me? Will I like it there? Am I good enough to do this? ... I was amazed!

I had heard about those summer research internships many times, so I was curious to see what they were about. I also had a friend that had participated in the program and said it was an amazing experience. Since I didn't have any official plans for the summer, I decided to apply. However, I never thought they will accept me, so my family didn't know that I had applied. I wasn't sure what to respond to the email, I was in speechless. I went back to the living room, and I sat there quiet for a couple of minutes.

Dad, Mom I have some news: "I applied for a Summer Research Program in Massachusetts, and I just got the notification that they have accepted me. I don't know what to do. I am not sure if I will be able to be there for three months by myself, I don't know if I will understand them since English is not my first language and I don't have a lot of experience doing research. What should I do?"

My family has always been supportive; however, they didn't know what to say. I am a first college generation student, so it wasn't clear to them what the program was about and the benefits that it will have. They were worried about how much they will need to pay and that I would be on my own away from home for the first time. I explained that the program covered all the costs and they didn't need to worry about money. I also told them that I knew a couple of friends that had participated in similar programs and they learned a lot and had a great time. We had several conversations about the benefits and disadvantages of participating in the program. I also sought advice from my college professors because I wanted to make an informed decision. After a couple of days, my dad told me: "this is one in a lifetime opportunity, you should do it! "

I can assure you that participating in that summer program has been one of the best decisions in my life. I had a fantastic experience; I met incredible people and most important I fell in love with research. I will admit that the first couple of weeks were not easy. I was alone in a place that I had never been before, I didn't have friends, and I had to speak English all the time. However, I overcame my fears, I became an independent student and I succeeded as a summer research fellow.

Throughout that research experience, I learned a lot. I was able to practice my writing and oral communication skills. I learned how to read a scientific paper and how to look for important details. I learned to work and be part of a science team. I also gain experience in design experiments, formulate a hypothesis and analyze results. All of those skills help me in my decision in applying to graduate school.

Now, I am completing my Ph.D. degree at Michigan State University. I am a scientist in training working in understanding the role of gut microbiota in bone density. I didn't dream of becoming a scientist; however, life surprised me with many opportunities that have made me the scientist that I am today and I am extremely happy for that.

So, my best advice to you: Fight for your dreams, overcome fears and take advantage of every opportunity that life gives you!

Below are several links with information about summer programs and how you can make an outstanding application. Good luck!

- [Making your summer research a good one](#) [3]
- [Application advice for undergraduate summer research](#) [4]
- [Summer research experiences for undergraduates](#) [5]
- [STEM undergraduate research programs](#) [6]
- [Summer Research Opportunities Program \(SROP\)](#) [7]
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