

Report for Research Experience for Undergraduates Supplement

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For two weeks in May 2013, I was fortunate to participate in a Research Experience for Undergraduates funded by the National Science Foundation. With the opportunities made available by this grant, our project on skilled migration has evolved, and I myself have grown into a more experienced researcher. In Oslo I not only received a glimpse into Norwegian culture and society, but also a hands-on education on how the research process works.

The day after touching down in Oslo, there was no time for transition. I was thrust into a professional setting on a daily basis where I was responsible for being engaged, inquisitive, and prepared with questions for the stakeholders in skilled migration that we interviewed. After completing the first day of interviews, I had learned much about the manner and mindset in which to conduct our Q&A sessions. We talked to two Human Resource managers in a large engineering company and two executives in Norwegian Oil and Gas. After I took everything said at face value, Dr. van Riemsdijk reminded me that people have their own agenda that they try to advance. One must be attentive and neutral. This revelation made me take a step back and allowed me to analyze people's responses more academically. I learned that some interviewees will try to guide your interview with prepared information. Some will be very open and transparent, giving you all the information that is available to them. Some will give you all the answers to your questions without you hardly having to open your mouth. Some skilled foreign-born workers that we met with needed more of a push to open up about their experiences while others were delighted to share their background and life with us. There is certainly a psychological aspect to research that I was not aware of before. One needs to be able to read people and situations well. Interviewing needs to be the perfect mixture of listening to peoples' stories and trying to extract the information that you really would like to know. The interview process was a tiring, but rewarding, seemingly endless search for information and perspectives from different people. I now feel capable to lead interviews, analyze responses, and maintain an academic while still personable state of mind throughout the procedure.

Collecting relevant perspectives to our skilled migration project is only one of many tasks. Fact-finding consumed much of our time in Oslo as well. We spent several days at FAFO, the Center for Labor and Social Research, in Oslo. Here, we consolidated the information that we had accumulated throughout the semester and took stock what information we had and did not have. Just by doing this, I understood the importance of organization in the research process: why we had a file-naming system, why we uploaded all our work to a file-sharing site, and why we kept detailed records of our sources. When one works on the same project for multiple months, let alone multiple years, it pays to obsess over how to maintain all of one's work and findings. Our team also spent hours looking up new information and integrating

that into what we already had. One afternoon, we made a visit to the National Library where we perused trade magazines relevant to the Norwegian Oil and Gas Industry for almost five hours. Our team poured over thousands of pages to gain a historical understanding of the knowledge economy and human capital becoming more important to the industry. I learned to work quickly and efficiently. As a researcher, one has to be willing to endure the more tedious tasks to get a more complete idea of an issue.

We sent out a survey to skilled migrants earlier this year. Since then, we have received over 200 responses from multiple companies. To organize our results, we use the program Atlas.ti to see where our respondents are from, and gain a better idea about their migratory experience. Questions asked why people applied for and accepted their job and inquired about their educational and international background. I went through each question's answer and coded it based upon a bigger theme. After going through 150 cases, it was easy to see what the most popular reasons for working in Norway's oil and gas industry were. Familiarization with a new computer program, Atlas.ti, was thus another skill I acquired.

Through this international research experience, I have definitely improved my interpersonal skills in a professional setting. I have become more comfortable being around knowledgeable professionals in various sectors with different occupations. I have presented my senior thesis on the global talent shortage to many of them and I feel increasingly comfortable in the business atmosphere. Practicing my oral communication skills has been a great reward from this experience.

I now feel confident that I have the ability to begin my own research project in the future. I know how to write a research question, how to limit the scope of my research, how to organize findings, how to interact with people pertinent to my interests, how to analyze what they say, and how to search for specific resources that will enhance the credibility of my work. Having worked on this project for the past year, I possess the skills, the mindset, and now the field experience. The comprehensiveness of my research education has been very thorough. I thank the National Science Foundation for providing the funding for my unique and enlightening experience and FAFO for an excellent working environment.