

Report for Research Experience for Undergraduates Supplement

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Jaylyn Johnson

Who knew research could be so much fun! Not to say that it is not very serious work that solves problems and invokes thought, but when I started the project I never expected that it would take me to new places and meet amazing people. All the work that the team, consisting of five people headed by Dr. Micheline van Riemsdijk, made sense while we were researching in Knoxville, but once we started doing new research and relating it to previous things we have learned, everything made much more sense and created a web of knowledge. My experience has influenced and sharpened my abilities as a researcher by participating in the activities and challenges for the project.

The activities that were completed on the trip have mostly stemmed from research that needed further answers that took place in Knoxville. While all of the team members have worked on individual projects, all of our projects are often related in many ways through the study of skilled migrants in Norway. My individual project studies the shortage of skilled workers in Norway and its connection to the Norwegian school system. I study if the system produces the quantity and quality of students needed to fulfill the need for engineers and IT specialists. While research has led me to grasp an understanding of this problem, it wasn't until I came to Norway that I actually could "feel" it. When I say this, I am referring to talking to the people of Norway and seeing and feeling the culture, and talking to citizens who have passionate and often interesting views on the direction Norway is heading academically and economically.

Ben and I must have been lucky because interviews were of abundance and often high quality. The most fruitful source of new knowledge about the project came from interviewing the skilled workers in Oslo, Norway. We gained this knowledge from an assortment of skilled workers consisting of three human resource managers for major oil and gas companies, two human resource managers for a large recruitment agency, four engineers and IT specialists whose responsibilities spanned from line manager to project engineer, and two heads of educational centers in Oslo. These interviews provided invaluable information for all of our projects, and it also gave me a chance to learn about areas of research that I might have missed or dismissed as unnecessary. While all of the interviews were helpful, the interview most relevant to my project was with the head of a center of natural sciences. She not only gave me pertinent information on my project but she also critiqued some of the information that I had gathered and gave me suggestions for future research.

Through the interviews, research, and other activities I feel that I have gained skills that will help me in future research. While I have conducted interviews before my trip to Norway,

they were for classes and they generally were informal meetings with other students. I could definitely tell the difference in quality and professionalism when participating in the interviews led by Dr. van Riemsdijk. I picked up on the important techniques while conducting an interview, as well as the necessary disclosure and paperwork to maintain ethical standards. I was even given the chance to lead several interviews which taught me the importance of having good eye contact, correct posture, and to be always ready to ask valuable follow up questions.

The research that we conducted was not only valuable in information, but also had key lessons that I think are important in my development as a researcher. While a simple task to look up information on the Internet might sound easy, I have learned while working on the project in Norway and in Knoxville, that finding information on important subjects can often be challenging. Working on the project has directly improved my research skills in several ways. Not only have I noticed that I am a better at working a search engine but I also have seen myself gain patience in my research. At one point the team needed to read through two to three decades of *Scandinavian Oil and Gas Magazine* to gain a historical perspective on talent shortages. Information was scarce at times and it took will power, patience, and a couple of tricks to stay awake, to find the information that we needed. I feel that moments like these were key to my development as a researcher, and to being a better student.

One thing that I cannot forget is to thank the institutions that made this trip possible and a lot more manageable: FAFO and NSF. I am ecstatic about my opportunity to go to Oslo and learn so many things and experience the Norwegian culture. Without the funding from NSF I would have never have gotten the chance. I am also grateful for the hospitality and warmness shown by everyone at FAFO, from the beginning of our trip to the end. Even though the research was intense at times and left us with little time to meet more of the FAFO researchers I appreciate the organization letting us use their resources and taking interest in all of our projects. You don't know how much of a help you were, and I would like to say thank you for your kindness during my visit.