

Student Internship Experience at University of Maryland

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Last summer semester 2012, the third year students from International School of Engineering (ISE) were all required to take the industrial training course 2140301. The course objective is to provide students with a chance to experience and apply engineering skills to a new working environment under the supervision of engineering experts or professors. I myself applied for the internship placement at University of Maryland, USA. Being a student intern in the United States broadened my perspective of life and opportunity for my future career in different ways.

On the day of my arrival to the University of Maryland, I had

meeting with my supervisor and trainers regarding the research overview. After completing all the documents required for the internship, I was given a tour of the laboratory including rules and regulation. The research group I worked with is under the supervision of Asst. Prof. Dongxia Liu, Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, A. James Clark School of Engineering. During the internship, I was assigned to work on my own project based on synthesis of zeolite. The topic of my research is Nano-Engineering Zeolite Films on Proton Conducting Membranes. The first week of my internship was the most difficult time for me since I had to learn all processes and methods of synthesis including how to

use the equipment in the laboratory. Moreover, I had very little knowledge in the material I worked with, which means that I had to work harder in order to catch up with other people in the same group. Although I found the difficulty in my work, I realized that this task made me become more mature. I learned to develop engineering problem-solving skills in my work, since the supervisor and the trainers were not always around there to help. I also learned to apply engineering knowledge to real life experience and understand the scope of Nano Engineering field clearer. Most importantly, I found that this internship provided me a great opportunity to gain hands on experience that cannot be taught in class but has to learn through experience.

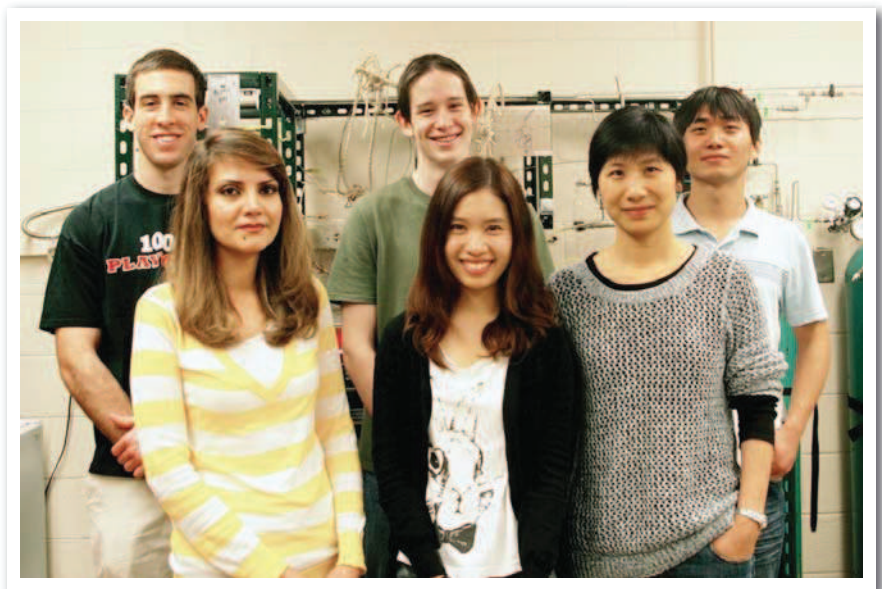
Apart from learning and developing engineering skills in the research work, one thing that I found important for the internship is personality and understanding of individuals and groups in work situation. It provided me an opportunity to learn to work as a team and adapt myself to the new working environment. Interaction among people is very necessary in the research area because it helps a person to understand each other better. For example, in my research group, there will be a seminar held every Friday. Each week, one of the members in the group will have to present their project to the rest of



the team, after that the questions will be asked from the professor and each person in the group. With this technique, individuals will have a chance to learn and improve their project through suggestion and discussion from other members in the team.

The University of Maryland is a public research university located in the city of College Park in Prince George's County, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C. It provides a suitable working environment and facilities for doing the research. Most of the time, students not only learn from inside the class, but also learn by doing. It can be easily found in research group that many undergraduate students go to meet their professors and ask them to work in the team after class. This broadened my perspective of working in the research field in foreign country. Comparing with those in Thailand, I found that Thailand still lacks of funding and facilities to support people who work in this area and we also need more people to study and work as a researcher in this field.

Having been to USA gave me such a great opportunity to experience life aside from doing the research. It enabled me to have patience, self-discipline, and willingness to learn new things. I learned to be more responsible and to take better care of myself and other people from this internship. Moreover, I learned to adapt myself to new culture and living style of American through interaction with different types of people from around the world. Being flexible is also very important for living in the States, since America is a country that has a diverse culture. There will be a lot of chance to get to know different traditions and



cultures among American people. Not only the new culture and environment that I experienced and adapted to my living in the States, being a part of this internship gave me an opportunity to exchange Thai culture to other people as well, including my colleagues and professor at the University of Maryland. For me, cultural exchange is one of the keys to get to know a person and help them understand each other better.

For students who want to apply for internship at the University of Maryland, the requirement will be posted on the website by the time of the admission process. After submitting the application, there will be an interview by ISE committee. In order to get the internship position at University of Maryland, I think students should be able to show that they are capable of adapting themselves to new place in foreign country and be able to tell what kind of work they want to do there including what they want to pursue from this internship.

Lastly, being a part of this internship at the University of Maryland can guide students to expand their knowledge in an effective way. It is

a good place for those who are interested in doing research and also the best place to find what they really want to do in the future. Students will gain hands on experience that cannot be taught in lecture class and also improve their engineering skills that is necessary for the jobs. At the end, I would like to thank the supervisor, trainers, ISE staffs and professors at the faculty of engineering for giving me this opportunity to work as a researcher at University of Maryland. It has been a great experience for me. I learned a lot from here and after I completed this internship, I have a strong intention to apply the knowledge I got to my work, project and future career with the hope that it can help drive the future of science and technology in Thailand to be even better. 🌞