

2024 Washington University in St. Louis Summer Research Internship Program

As a summer research intern at Washington University in St. Louis from June 17 to August 23, I had the opportunity to experience both academic growth and personal enrichment. To start with the living environment provided by WashU, the dorms were well-equipped with modern amenities, offering a great balance between privacy and communal spaces. Living in the dorms provided a strong sense of community, where I bonded with fellow interns and students from diverse backgrounds. We often cooked meals together, sharing recipes from different cultures, and our evenings were filled with laughter as we chatted or played games in the common areas. Our weekly grocery shopping usually took place in Trader Joe's, Dierbergs, Whole Foods Market, and Schnucks. Each store had its own unique appeal, so we often found ourselves rotating between them depending on what we needed. However, Trader Joe's and Dierbergs are the ones that we visited the most often since the commute was more convenient and the prices were more affordable. Besides grocery shopping, our weekends were packed with fun activities as well. We shopped at Galleria Mall and St. Louis Premium Outlet for a variety of items, from clothing and shoes to accessories and gifts. We also visited a few local museums, including both history and art museums. It was inspiring to learn about the rich historical heritage of the region, as well as a diverse collection of artwork spanning various cultures and time periods. The St. Louis Zoo was also another must-visit site in St. Louis. One of the highlights of our visit was seeing the Penguin & Puffin Coast, where we got an up-close look at these fascinating birds in a cold, immersive environment. The River's Edge exhibit, which featured animals like rhinos, was another favorite, allowing us to witness these magnificent creatures in a safari-like setting. For me, what made the zoo even more enjoyable was that the admission was free, making it an accessible and budget-friendly activity.

The WashU campus provided a serene environment for study and relaxation. My days in the McKelvey School of Engineering were filled with meaningful research experiences. I had the opportunity to work closely with knowledgeable mentors and collaborate with fellow PhD and Master students on projects that broadened my understanding of the field. It created a dynamic learning environment that pushed me to think critically and approach problems from multiple angles. The hands-on experience in the lab was also invaluable since I had the opportunity to apply theoretical concepts in a practical setting, further enhancing my technical skills in conducting independent research. Thus, the sense of accomplishment I felt from contributing to ongoing research was deeply rewarding. One of the most impactful experiences during my summer at WashU was participating in the poster session, where all the interns had the opportunity to share their research work with peers, faculty, and other members of the academic community. Preparing my poster allowed me to synthesize my research findings and present them in a clear, concise manner, which was a valuable exercise in communication and critical thinking. The session itself was an eye-opening experience. Not only did I receive constructive feedback on my own work, but I also had the chance to learn from the diverse research projects presented by other interns. These projects spanned various fields, from biomedical engineering to computer science. Engaging with these projects expanded my intellectual curiosity and inspired me to explore interdisciplinary approaches in my own work.

Besides academic work, the summer program also provided a wide variety of student activities, which allowed me to bond with my peers outside the academic environment. These activities created a wonderful balance between work and leisure. One of the highlights was attending a performance at The Muny, an outdoor musical theater. Another memorable outing was our visit to Gateway Arch National Park, a symbol of St. Louis. Riding to the top of the arch and looking out over the city provided breathtaking views. For more relaxed and casual fun, we had bowling nights, where we could let loose and enjoy some friendly competition. In my opinion, one of the most exciting events was attending a St. Louis Cardinals baseball game. It was a great time experiencing a live baseball

game, and the energy in the stadium was infectious. Shouting and cheering alongside the crowd as the Cardinals took the field. Additionally, during lunch with the dean, we had the chance to gather and reflect on our experiences about the program. We shared what we enjoyed most and discussed areas for improvement. It was a casual and enjoyable conversation, and I also felt a sense of accomplishment when the dean presented us with our certificates. These social activities provided by WashU didn't just provide fun; they offered a meaningful way to experience the local culture and build friendships and long-lasting memories. St. Louis's food scene was another highlight of my summer, especially the Delmar Loop area, which has diverse dining options, ranging from Chinese, Thai, Vietnam, to Mexican restaurants, and most importantly, it is just a 10-minute walk from the campus. Of all the restaurants, I highly recommend Salt & Smoke for its delicious barbecue and Ted Drewes Custard Ice Cream, a local favorite that truly lives up to its fame.

Even though the visa and ITIN preparation processes were complicated and exhausting at first, WashU's support made everything much smoother. They ensured that all the necessary documentation was handled properly, which helped ease a lot of the stress. The counselors were incredibly patient and attentive, always willing to listen to my concerns and provide guidance. Their proactive approach and frequent updates kept me informed throughout the entire process. Overall, my time at WashU was a perfect blend of academic exploration, cultural experiences, exciting activities, and personal growth. The program not only deepened my research skills but also provided unforgettable experiences that enriched my summer in countless ways. From collaborating with talented researchers and presenting my work at the poster session to exploring St. Louis and bonding with fellow students, every moment added value to my experience.



