

2024 HKU Summer Research Programme
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I am grateful for the opportunity to attend the HKU Summer Research Programme this summer. Participating in such an esteemed programme allowed me to delve deeply into the world of research, collaborate with international peers, and gain valuable insights into my field of interest. The programme brought together exceptional students from all over the world who share a passion for research, creating a unique environment where I could learn from the strengths of others and form meaningful friendships. This experience also gave me a chance to reflect on my growing research interest and how it has contributed to my personal growth and independence. Through this journey, I learned not only about the technical aspects of research but also about taking responsibility for my development as I matured into a more self-reliant individual.

Motivation

As someone who grew up in Taipei and had never lived independently until college, I've always been eager to explore the world beyond my familiar surroundings. When I discovered the HKU Summer Research Programme through my NTU email, it immediately struck me as a perfect opportunity. Not only was it research-oriented—aligning with my academic interests—but it was also located in Hong Kong, a place close to Taiwan, making it an ideal stepping stone for my first experience living abroad. Furthermore, since my mother is from Hong Kong, I hold a Hong Kong identity, which not only simplified the logistics of studying abroad but also deepened my desire to explore this vibrant city—a place that feels like another facet of home to me.

Application Process

Applying to the HKU Summer Research Programme was not a straightforward process. Initially, I was not selected as one of NTU's ten recommended candidates, so I decided to apply on my own without a recommendation letter. I chose Prof. Chow Shing Fung as my mentor, and luckily, he took notice of my application. We had a brief conversation about my research interests and the lab's focus, after which he kindly agreed to be my recommender. With his support, I was successfully accepted into the HKU SRP.

Diverse and Dynamic Learning Environment

The HKU Summer Research Programme brought together people from different countries, including the U.S., Canada, England, Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Korea. I got to meet others who shared a strong interest in research. Even though we came from different backgrounds and fields, and sometimes had language barriers, our passion for research brought us together easily. Many of the students were outstanding, and I learned a lot from them. The programme also offered fun courses and activities to help us build soft skills. Overall, interacting with such a diverse group opened my eyes and helped me grow.

Mentorship and Research Exposure

This was my first time involved in pharmaceutical research, and I'm really glad to have had such a great mentor, Prof. Chow Shing Fung. I learned a lot from the lab. First, my mentor assigned me a topic on nanoagglomerate dry powder, which allowed me to explore how to prepare nanoparticles and use a spray dryer. Additionally, the senior student overseeing this topic gave me some freedom in conducting experiments, which helped me become more independent in my research. Prof. Chow not only offered guidance on the research itself but also provided valuable advice on presentation skills, writing, and career planning. I gained so much from this experience, the lab members, and my mentor, all of which helped me clarify my research interests and future direction.

Challenges and Personal Growth

Throughout my journey in the HKU Summer Research Programme, I encountered several challenges, but these difficulties helped me grow faster.

1. I used to be a bit shy when meeting new people and wasn't very good at adapting to a completely new environment. During this programme, I told myself to keep an open mind and be brave in building connections with others. Fortunately, I made many close friends here, which helped me adjust to life in Hong Kong more quickly. I'm grateful to everyone who spoke with me and treated me with kindness. I learned a lot from them and hope to be as kind and supportive to others as they were to me.
2. I also faced challenges in my research. Initially, I was able to produce high-quality nanoparticles quickly. However, I encountered numerous obstacles when trying to convert the nanoparticles into dry powders. We analyzed different factors and tried repeatedly, which was frustrating at times, but eventually, we found the right approach and achieved good results. This experience taught me about the inevitable setbacks in research and how to problem-solve through persistence, making it an invaluable learning opportunity.
3. During the last two weeks, I worked remotely on my HKU SRP project due to my compulsory internship at NTU. This meant balancing both my NTU coursework and preparing for my HKU SRP final presentation simultaneously. Through this experience, I learned to manage my limited time effectively, prioritize tasks, and do my best in each one. In the end, I flew back to Hong Kong for two days to deliver my presentation, and it went smoothly and successfully!

In conclusion, the HKU Summer Research Programme has been an incredibly enriching experience for me. I not only learned a great deal from exploring a new research topic but also grew by adapting to a completely new environment and building connections with people from all around the world. This programme pushed me to step outside of my comfort zone, and in doing so, I learned more about myself—my strengths, weaknesses, and how to navigate challenges. Living and interacting with international students over the course of two months gave me the chance to form meaningful friendships and share unique experiences. From traveling around Hong Kong to understanding the culture at the University of Hong Kong, this journey helped me broaden my horizons in so many ways. I'm incredibly thankful for this opportunity, which has truly shaped both my personal and academic growth.

