

Summer Research Program in HKU

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My summer at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) was a transformative experience, both academically and personally. HKU, being the top university in Hong Kong, offers a vibrant academic environment that fosters both innovation and collaboration. From the moment I stepped onto the campus, I was struck by the university's rich blend of tradition and modernity. The historic buildings, with their colonial architecture, stand in harmony with state-of-the-art research facilities, symbolizing HKU's commitment to bridging the past with the future.

The research program I participated in was an interdisciplinary initiative that brought together students and scholars from various fields. This diversity of perspectives was one of the most enriching aspects of the program. My project was at the intersection of tissue engineering and oral oncology, an area that I had little prior experience in. Initially, I felt a bit out of my depth, surrounded by experts in fields that were unfamiliar to me. However, this challenge quickly turned into an opportunity for growth. With the guidance of my mentors and the collaborative spirit of my peers, I was able to dive deep into the subject matter. I learned not only the technical skills needed to conduct research but also the importance of approaching problems from multiple angles.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the program was the opportunity to work closely with my peers. We came from different backgrounds—some were studying engineering, others were focused on dentistry, and a few were in the chemical engineering. Despite our diverse academic interests, we all shared a common goal: to contribute something meaningful to our respective fields. This shared purpose fostered a sense of camaraderie among us. We would often spend long hours in the lab or the library, bouncing ideas off each other and helping one another overcome challenges. These interactions were not just intellectually stimulating; they also helped forge lasting friendships.

The program also included a series of seminars and workshops designed to broaden our understanding of research beyond our specific projects. One of the most memorable workshops was on ethical considerations in research. We discussed complex issues such as data privacy, the potential for bias in research outcomes, and the responsibilities researchers have towards society. These discussions were eye-opening and made me more aware of the broader implications of my work.

Outside of the academic environment, the program offered numerous networking opportunities. I attended several networking events where I met professionals from various expertise. These events were invaluable for gaining insights into how research can be applied in real-world settings. I was particularly inspired by a story from my mentor, regarding how his students were able to translate their research from academia to commercial applications. He shared their journey of how the skills he developed during their time at HKU—critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability—had been crucial in the success outside of academia. The story resonated with me and made me consider the various paths my career could take after completing my studies.

Another highlight of my time in Hong Kong was getting to know the local culture. Hong Kong is a city that is truly unique—it's a place where East meets West, and this cultural fusion is evident

in every aspect of life. From the food to the festivals, Hong Kong is a city of contrasts. I spent weekends exploring the city, visiting places like Victoria Peak, the bustling markets of Mong Kok, and the tranquil beaches of Lantau Island. Each of these experiences gave me a deeper appreciation for the city and its people.

The food in Hong Kong deserves a special mention. The city is a food lover's paradise, with a culinary scene that ranges from street food stalls to Michelin-starred restaurants. I was introduced to a variety of local dishes, from dim sum to char siu, and developed a particular fondness for egg tarts. Sharing meals with my new friends was a great way to bond and learn more about each other's cultures. We would often venture out to try different restaurants, each time discovering new flavors and dishes.

The program also organized several cultural activities, including a visit to a local fishing village. These experiences were not just enjoyable; they also provided a window into the rich cultural heritage of Hong Kong. I learned a lot during the visits, which provides several principles that I found applicable to my research work as well.

One of the most memorable events is the party after our final presentation, where we got to release the accumulated stress of us thriving to present the best of our research. We had a blast and developed deeper connections with each other, and truly realized that our precious times of joy



and hard work were finally coming to the end. After all the experience as a research student in Hong Kong, I reinforced my capabilities of balancing research works, daily life, and social activities simultaneously, which is a valuable growth for me to envision a splendid postgraduate life rather than being a dull, stressful working machine that I had been aware of.

As the program drew to a close, I found myself reflecting on all that I had learned and experienced. The interdisciplinary nature of the program had broadened my understanding of research and showed me the value of collaboration across fields. The friendships I made and the cultural experiences I had enriched my life in ways I hadn't anticipated. I left Hong Kong with a sense of accomplishment and a renewed passion for research.

My time at The University of Hong Kong was more than just an academic endeavor; it was a journey of personal growth. I came away with a deeper understanding of what it means to be a researcher and a global citizen. The skills and insights I gained will undoubtedly shape my future academic and professional pursuits. More importantly, the memories of my time in Hong Kong—the late-night discussions with friends, the thrill of discovery in the lab, and the vibrant energy of the city—will stay with me for a lifetime.

