

An Interview with ANSC Undergraduate Student Kayla Johnston on Her Internship Experience at William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute

Q: Where did you intern, and when?

I participated in the Agricultural Research summer internship at the William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute, located in Chazy, NY. I interned during the summer of 2019.

Q: Was it a paid internship? What did you do there?

Yes, it was paid. I received a stipend for the summer and a portion of the stipend was taken to provide me with on-site housing, as well as lunch five days a week. Many of the interns are from all over the country, so housing is provided. I assisted with various ongoing dairy cattle research projects and got to learn skills such as blood, milk, and fecal sampling, growth measurements, behavioral observation, feeding, and evacuation of the rumen. We got to work with cannulated cows and sample their rumen fluids, as well as take digesta samples directly from the rumen. We also got to participate in the institute's "Farm Days for Fifth Graders" event, where we educated hundreds of 5th grade students on dairy, horse, and crop farming. I got to run the cannulated cow station and teach kids why we cannulate cows, how cow's digestive systems are different, and got to help them stick their arms inside the cow's rumen! The overall experience was very educational and I got to attend lectures on dairy management, visit various NY crop and dairy farms, visit nutrient management research sites, and even observe a cow necropsy. I even participated in an artificial insemination certification course. The highlight of the program was conducting my own independent research project. My project was focused on changes in milk composition as cows adapt to dietary changes, and I learned how to perform data analysis, wrote a written project report, and presented the results to the institute.

Q: When did you apply for this internship?

I applied during December/January of the 2018/2019 year. Applications are usually posted in late fall and due early February. I was contacted for a phone interview a few weeks later and selections were made in early March. You need to be a current junior or senior to apply.

Q: How long did the internship last?

The internship was 15 weeks long and lasted most of the summer (end of May to middle of August).

Q: How did you learn about this opportunity?

It was advertised in an email from the Department of Animal Science. I wanted more experience working with dairy cattle as well as research experience outside of the lab, so this opportunity seemed perfect for me.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add about your experience?

It was an incredible experience and I can't recommend it enough. The staff were amazing, I learned so much and got to apply knowledge from my coursework, and I participated in so many new experiences. I had so much fun working with the cows and made some great friends. I feel that I really developed my skills as a researcher. If you are considering graduate school, I highly recommend this program as it will show you what graduate school is really like, as well as help you make some great connections in the dairy science field.

Q: What is your area of interest as an ANSC major?

I was originally pre-vet, but found that I love animal nutrition and research, so I am now pre-grad.

Q: So, what are your plans when you graduate?

I am currently applying to M.S. programs focused on dairy cattle nutrition. I am also considering pursuing a Ph.D. after my master's. I would like to pursue a career in dairy cattle research.

Q: If someone has questions, can they contact you regarding your internship experience?

Of course! My email is kayla.johnston@uconn.edu. Miner Institute also has two other summer experience opportunities in addition to Agricultural Research: the Equine Management and the Dairy Farm Management programs. I can also try to answer questions about these programs, even though I did not participate in them.

