



A weekly newsletter for students, family, faculty, mentors, and friends

Newsletter 1

May 27 through June 2, 2015

THE MHIRT 2015 SUMMER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE HAS BEGUN!

On Wednesday, May 27th, ten 2015 MHIRT students, along with Dr. Nerurkar, left for Bangkok, Thailand and one newly-graduated student left for Munich, Germany. After a competitive selection process, a semester of Wednesday night meetings, working with UH mentors to define their research projects, and learning about cultural differences, the group was ready to travel abroad to start conducting research. While in transit, everyone stayed “connected” via cell phone email. The email exchange went as follows:

Robinson Bucaneg (May 27th): “I am currently sitting in my plane at LAX airport and about to take off for Munich.”

Dr. Nerurkar replied: “Let us know when you arrive in Munich. We all are at Narita airport.”

Robinson reported, “I have arrived in Munich!!!!”

Later in the day (May 28th) Dr. N. announced, “We just arrived in BKK and are settled in our rooms [at Viva Gardens]. It’s 1:36pm in BKK.”

Yea! Everyone arrived safely, on time, and with their luggage containing research supplies. Good start!



1 MHIRT 2015 students in Narita airport

Robinson was met at the airport by his mentor, Dr. Tim Liedl, holding a sign that read “Aloha Robinson,” since the two had never met. Tim provided a tour of Munich and took Rob to his flat, who reported later in the day, “I’m totally fine! My flat mate is awesome! He cooked me an omelette.” “I got to spend a few hours walking to Marienplatz and to LMU to familiarize myself with the city. I love Munich so far!”



2 Robinson at the Marienplatz

On Friday, the students in Bangkok had the day to recover from jet lag, but many of them headed out to see the sights. While in Germany,



Robinson went to work.

After walking to the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU), avoiding bicyclists, he wrote “The next day [after arriving], I got to meet the people of the soft matter department at LMU. Everyone, and I mean everyone, was very welcoming and sociable! I’ve never felt so welcomed before. In fact, they invited me to have coffee with them for lunch and also the Chinese tower beer garden in the evening!” “... where we had masses of beer (not steins) and shared plates of french fries, pretzels, schnitzel, and half chickens. The beer was surprisingly smooth and probably the best I’ve ever had. German pretzels are huge and

really, really salty!” Over the weekend, “I managed to find some real cheap pastry shops and boy do they have great pastries. Each for about 1 euro each, all I do is point at random pastries (not everyone speaks English) and try them out.” This week, Robinson attended a lecture, but struggled to understanding the information on the slides since the lecture was in Germany. Stay tuned, for more information about his research in the next time.

Meanwhile, back in Bangkok, the students received an orientation on Saturday from other University of Hawai’i students who started conducting research in Thailand last Fall. The 4 graduate students and post-doc are supported by another training grant on Global Health. The orientation included information about living in Bangkok and summer research. Dr. James Kelly (----->), a UH graduate, described the weekly Journal Club that will be held at 8:30am on Tuesdays. Students will work with their Thai mentors to select a recent publication, prepare a PowerPoint presentation, and present the study to scientists at Mahidol University, including a discussion of the significance of the research results.



The schedule includes:

June 9: Christian Dye (HIV)
June 16: Samantha Esperanza (HPV, JC, BK)
June 23: Chaewon Im (HIV/HPV)
June 30: Maya Uemoto (Dengue)

July 7: Sairel Labasan (Burkholderia)
July 14: Raphael Raman (MRI/MRs for meth patients and McMillan Ching (HIV) via Skype from Chiang Mai
July 21: Kellyan Nguyen (Hep E) & Taneesha Asing (malaria)
July 28: Sakaria Auelua-Toomey (HIV/HPV)

In the afternoon, the students explored Bangkok using the BTS Skytrain (mass transit) system, and visited Mahidol University at Phayathai, where 5 of MHIRT students will be working, and S.E.A.R.C.H. (Southeast Asia Research Collaboration with Hawaii) at the Thai Red Cross, where 2 MHIRT students will work. One student is working at AFRIMS (Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences).



Sunday was the day Raphael and McMillan said good-bye to the group and, along with Dr. N, flew to Chiang Mai where they will spend the summer. They toured Chiang Mai University (which they report is HUGE), met McMillan’s mentor, and had lunch at Khaomao-Khaofang restaurant that serves Northern Thai cuisine. (We will have to learn about the differences in Bangkok and Northern Thailand food in subsequent newsletters). The guys promised to send photos of Chiang Mai for the next Newsletter.

Since Monday was a holiday in Thailand, the Chiang Mai group visited Wat Phra That Doi Suthep Temple during the Thai Holiday for the feast of Visakha Bucha, the most important occasion in Buddhist practice/faith. While back in Bangkok, the students visited various sights, e.g., the Chao Phraya River, the Grand Palace, or took in a movie. Therefore, everyone was rested and ready to start their research on Tuesday.

Stay tuned for the next Newsletter to see what projects the MHIRT 2015 students are doing.