

«Everybody was warm-hearted and welcoming»

In diesem Sommer absolvierte Nджуoh MehChu, Student an der University of Chicago Law School, am Lehrstuhl von Prof. Dr. Klaus Mathis ein zweimonatiges Forschungspraktikum. Wie er im Interview erzählt, war es eine äusserst gewinnbringende Erfahrung.

■ INTERVIEW: ARIEL DAVID STEFFEN

Nджуoh MehChu, please introduce yourself.

I am from the Greater New York City area and am currently a Juris Doctorate candidate at the University of Chicago Law School.

In what capacity did you work?

I worked for Prof. Klaus Mathis as a Research Assistant from June to August 2014. My research was focused on Behavioural Law and Economics and «nudging» with particular attention to the welfare consequences of impersonal default options on rational and informed decision makers.



Nджуoh MehChu.
(Bild: Ariel David Steffen)

What made you want to work abroad?

I just had to be truthful and really figure out what I wanted to get out of the experience. I wanted to go somewhere that I felt my skills could be fully utilized and I could make immediate contributions. After doing some preliminary research and learning about the opportunity to work for Prof. Mathis, my choice was easy. I have a background in economics and so the prospect of being able to merge law and economics in a interdisciplinary atmosphere was a great opportunity. Moreover, as someone who loves to learn new languages, be immersed in different cultures and engaged in unique travel experiences, I had a desire to go out and explore more of the world around me.

What made your experience abroad a success?

Everyone I interacted with at the University was, without exception, warm-hearted and welcoming and because of that, I was able to learn a lot more about the local culture than I might otherwise have. I had an amazing supervisor and cooperative co-workers who were a joy to collaborate with and who patiently introduced me to the culture in Switzerland while I was doing my internship in Lucerne.

Did you participate in cultural activities? What was it like?

In a sense everything is a cultural activity, isn't it? I danced in all the cities, played soccer, ate local cuisine and spoke Swiss German and German, if only very poorly. It was incredibly fulfilling to do these types of things, because it allowed me to interact with locals on a peer level.

What was the biggest challenge in adapting to your international work environment?

Because I had little to no fluency in the language, I had to get used to not being able to understand those speaking around me. In retrospect, this provided the motivation to continue to study the language.

Describe an experience that made a particularly strong impression on you.

The World Cup in the heart of Europe, amazing.

What did you miss most about home while working abroad?

The restaurant Chipotle Mexican Grill.

What tips can you give anyone looking to follow in your footsteps?

Make local contacts so you can see things beyond the tourism traps and travel. Being in the heart of Europe, traveling to surrounding countries was relatively easy and inexpensive. I was fortunate enough to travel to many cities in surrounding countries, including London, Amsterdam and Paris. Each country provided a unique experience. My work term also allowed me to develop an understanding of the way different cultures participate in recreational activities. In short, remember to keep an open mind and don't forget to try new things. Music, dancing, food, traveling, festivals – there are so many things to explore.

How has the experience abroad shaped your career plans, if at all?

An international work term is one of the best things that I have ever done in my life and for my education. I know I want to travel more and see the rest of the world. For me, education is a life-long process, and this is only the beginning.

Do you have any final reflections on your experience?

It is truly impossible to predict the experiences that you will have abroad, so it is best to just dive in. Once you have decided and you are committed to your experience, just go with the flow. Surrender to the experience and know that the challenges you face today will be different tomorrow. Don't forget to think of sustainability: not just what you are doing, but what the next intern will do, and the next and the next and what your work means for the bigger picture.

Ariel David Steffen, MA, ist SNF-Doktorand bei Prof. Dr. Klaus Mathis.