

Final Reflection on My 2024 Summer Enrichment Experience at the Michigan Math and Science Scholars Program

By Jordan Johnson

Academic Challenges and Learning

The MMSS program presented various academic challenges that pushed my boundaries. The workload consisted mostly of lectures and labs. A particularly intriguing lab involved constructing a heat engine that used energy transfer from hot water to cold water to power a motor, which was new to me despite my background in AP Biology and Physics. The first few days were mostly review for me, but the labs and lectures from Thursday and Friday introduced new concepts that expanded my understanding of physics and biology.

Group Work and Faculty Interaction

Working in small groups was a significant part of the program. The labs were very memorable as they combined interesting concepts with teamwork, allowing me to form bonds with others. Our professor was exceptional, managing to keep three-hour lectures engaging, and he even treated us to ice cream, which added a personal touch to the rigorous academic schedule.

Rigor of the Curriculum

The class was not overly difficult, but the sheer amount of information we were expected to absorb each day was challenging. It took me a few days to get used to the volume of material covered in the lectures. While the labs were easier to manage, the lectures required me to take more notes than usual to fully grasp the concepts.

Content of the Program

Many of the topics and concepts were familiar to me from AP Biology and Physics, but this course delved deeper into those subjects. Learning the content definitely enhanced my understanding of biophysics and its medical applications. The detailed exploration of these topics made the academic experience both challenging and rewarding.

Expectations and Workload

The expectations of the program were clear and manageable. The workload was also manageable, and I felt that I handled it well by focusing on taking good notes and reviewing them to ensure I understood the material completely. The structured approach helped me stay organized and on top of my studying.

Hands-On Work and Preparedness

The hands-on projects and labs, such as the heat engine experiment and the capillary action lab, were particularly impactful. These experiences not only reinforced theoretical concepts but also provided practical applications, making the learning process more engaging and effective.

Greatest Accomplishment and Learning Experience

My greatest accomplishment during the program was making friends with many like-minded individuals and maintaining contact with them even after the program ended. A valuable lesson I learned is that there are many kind people out there, and it's worthwhile to step out of your comfort zone to meet new people.

Faculty and Student Contributions

The faculty and students greatly enriched my experience. The professor's engaging lectures and the supportive teaching assistants made the learning environment stimulating. My classmates' shared passion for science created an atmosphere of enthusiasm and curiosity, which enhanced the overall experience.

Residential Experience and Social Life

Living in the residential hall was a refreshing change from home. The dorm rooms were cozy, my roommate was friendly, and walking around campus, especially in the sunny weather, was invigorating. The convenience of the dining hall allowed me to explore various cuisines, enhancing my overall experience.

Socially, I quickly found a group of friends, and we engaged in activities like basketball and ping pong, which helped me bond with people from diverse backgrounds. Watching Team USA basketball games together also added to the camaraderie. A memorable event was the Boba Tea night, where we shared music and stories from our home countries, fostering cultural exchange.

Preparedness for the Program

Initially, I was nervous coming into the program, but after a few days, I felt more relaxed and realized I had nothing to worry about. Although I forgot to bring a few items, I easily purchased what I needed from a nearby store, which helped me feel more prepared and comfortable.

Value of the Residential Experience

The residential experience added significant value to the program. Living on campus allowed me to immerse myself fully in the academic and social aspects of MMSS. The close-knit community and shared experiences created a supportive and enriching environment that enhanced my overall experience.

Influence on Future Academic and Career Paths

MMSS has influenced my future academic and career paths by reinforcing my passion for science and highlighting the importance of collaboration and cultural awareness. I believe the skills and experiences gained here will help me contribute positively to the world.

Personal Growth and Changes

The program helped me grow personally by fostering a sense of independence and confidence in navigating a new environment. It also taught me the importance of stepping out of my comfort zone to meet new people and embrace new experiences.

Recommendation for Future Students

I would highly recommend this program to other students. It not only enhances academic knowledge but also promotes personal development and global understanding. The diverse and dynamic community, along with the supportive faculty and engaging curriculum, makes MMSS an invaluable experience. Attending this program was the highlight of my summer and I am sure many other students would love to have this experience and would learn a lot from it as well.