

Final Reflection of My 2025 Summer Enrichment Experience at the Boston University Summer Challenge Program

By Addison Krotz

Receiving a second scholarship from the Garwin Family Foundation has been an incredible honor and one that I do not take lightly. I felt incredible excitement and gratitude when I received the email that I was getting the opportunity to attend the Boston University Summer Challenge program. Along with my excitement, I was filled with a familiar wave of nerves. Even though I had an amazing experience at the University of Michigan, there was still uncertainty and nerves, considering I was going to be the first in the foundation to attend Boston's Summer Challenge. However, just like before, my nerves quickly settled the moment I arrived and began meeting the people who would soon become a major part of my life.

Having the program divided into two courses really helped me get a better understanding of what college will actually be like. The program was divided into a morning Chemistry of Medicine class and an afternoon Anatomy and Physiology class. From the first day, I could tell that both classes were going to have my full interest and attention. Each morning began with a detailed lecture about how different medicines interact with the human body, and how they are designed and produced. We learned about the functional groups and drug structures to explore how drugs are discovered and absorbed throughout the body. Being encouraged to take notes, ask questions, and be constantly engaged really helped pull me into the class even further. It was challenging in all the right ways.

Afternoons in Anatomy and Physiology were equally interesting. Each day focused on a different body system. Our professor would begin with a lecture that introduced the body system. Then we

would break into groups to label human models and identify key parts. These hands-on activities brought the material to life and helped to reinforce what we had learned.

What made the experience even more memorable were the labs in my anatomy class. We dissected a sheep's heart and a pig kidney, which helped give a hands-on understanding of organ structure and function. The labs in my chemistry class were fascinating, especially the experiment involving glow sticks to look at antioxidant levels of different substances. Each lab had its own unique outcome, which made them even more intriguing going into them. We were responsible for preparing pre-lab assignments, answering reflection questions, and comparing our data with fellow classmates.

By the end of the first week, I felt like I had already learned so much, but there was still more to come. During the second week, our chemistry labs focused more on synthesizing real compounds. These reactions required precision, patience, and teamwork. For our last lab, we were required to write a lab report. I've written lab reports before but this was my first time writing a college-level report. In anatomy, we shifted to more lecture-heavy sessions but still participated in group work and activities. By the end of the program, we had completed presentations in both classes that really challenged us to see what we learned and retained. Presenting in front of peers and parents pushed me outside my comfort zone, but also gave me a new confidence in my ability to present and explain complex topics.

One of the most meaningful parts of my experience was the time I spent with the friends I made. Outside of class, the program organized social events to help us all feel comfortable with each

other for the two weeks, and those moments quickly turned into strong, lasting bonds. I became very close with my roommates. I was initially nervous to meet them because having not just one but two roommates was a new experience for me. But as soon as they arrived, we instantly clicked and became very close. We would talk every night about our lives from different parts of the world and share stories from our classes. Since we were enrolled in different courses, we always had something new to tell each other. I loved learning about each of their languages and even learned how to say a few words and phrases! Another close friend I met within minutes of arriving on campus. We spent almost every day together, whether we were at a scheduled social event or just hanging out in between classes. Two of the friends I grew close with were from Greece, and one of the funniest and most memorable moments was watching them try Subway sandwiches for the very first time. On Sunday, a few of us decided to go to the local shops on Newbury Street. When we got there, we realized that every Sunday the street was closed off to cars, which turned it into a pedestrian-only area with pop-up tents. It was such an incredible, welcoming atmosphere. I've always loved open street areas because they show that we all can come together and just have fun. Before the trip, I was extremely nervous on the flight to Boston because I was worried I wouldn't make many friends or that I'd have trouble connecting. But I was proven wrong instantly and made so many connections that I will never forget. Not only did I meet so many kind, funny, and interesting people during these two weeks, but I also formed real connections that I know will last a lifetime. I still talk to the friends I made at my last program daily, and now I have even more people to stay in touch with from even more parts of the world.

This opportunity has meant the world to me. It helped me dive deeper into my interest in medicine, expand my knowledge, and imagine what my college future might look like. It has

also given me the chance to meet people from around the world who share similar passions and ambitions. Being selected twice by the Garwin Family Foundation makes me feel incredibly proud and supported by my academic journey and achievements. I've grown in confidence, curiosity, and my ability to connect with others. It's safe to say that I have become a better person because of the Garwin Family Foundation. I know I'll carry these lessons and friendships from this program for the rest of my life.