



Special Pathogens Laboratory Intern Profile

Natalie D'Antonio



Natalie D'Antonio dreams crime scene investigation. Currently pursuing a Master's degree in Forensic Science at Duquesne University, her future plans include complementing her science education with a degree in Law. Her love of science solidified when she was in high school where her senior graduation project focused on researching DNA. Natalie's undergraduate degree is also from DU and is in Biology. This past summer she was lucky enough to land an internship at the Special Pathogens Laboratory (SPL) located in uptown Pittsburgh on Forbes Avenue. SPL specializes in providing reliable, high-quality microbiology services specializing in the detection, control and remediation of waterborne pathogens such as Legionella, Pseudomonas, Mycobacteria, and fungi.

Natalie was excited about her internship at SPL because it offered the opportunity to learn much more about microbiology, a subject not covered to her satisfaction during her formal studies. This summer she learned how to process all kinds of water samples to prepare them for testing and spent countless hours counting Serratia bacteria in petri dishes. Additionally, she worked on two special projects conducting research and testing commercial products for bacteria levels. Natalie explained, "Working [at SPL] requires an extreme amount of organization and attention to detail. My experience in the lab has given me practical application to enhance my textbook learning and has taught me critical thinking and problem solving skills." Moving forward, many of her classes will be spent in the university's labs, Natalie feels that her experience at SPL has certainly better prepared her for final year at Duquesne University. She added, "SPL is a laid back, friendly environment where everyone is willing to help you and people love what they are doing. It has been a wonderful place for me to become more comfortable working in a lab and learn to make better decisions."

Jaclynn Shannon, Vice President of Operations, describes Natalie as, "smart, personable, dedicated, and very flexible. She fits nicely within our environment." Very pleased with their experiences with interns, SPL plans to continue hiring students to supplement their full-time workforce and help out with special projects. It is their mission to be on the cutting edge of research in microbiology and continue to provide training and educational opportunities for local college students.

The Pittsburgh Central Keystone Innovation Zone sponsors internships at biomedical and technology start-ups located within the zone with a goal of creating sustainable economic growth through job creation.