

Grant Application for an Internship Position at the ZEW

I have received an internship position at the Zentrum für Europäische Wirtschaftsforschung (Center for European Economic Research) located in Mannheim, Germany. The institute conducts research in a variety of fields, focusing primarily on questions pertaining to European economics and integration. The institute publishes approximately 100 papers annually and hosts numerous events throughout the year. These include things such as paper conferences, panels, and talks on many different topics. As an intern, I will have the opportunity to attend and participate in these events. They employ many interns throughout the calendar year, who are mostly graduate students or students like me who are nearing completion of their undergraduate studies. While the ZEW is an independent research institute many of its researchers are also university professors or graduate students at the University of Mannheim. Many also work in the German government or for the European Union in some capacity.

I was extended an offer for a position in the Corporate Taxation and Public Finance division as a research intern. My work there will be focused primarily on the practical application of quantitative methods, as well as of economic theory and research skills more generally. I expect to work on a team project comprised of both faculty researchers and interns that seeks to answer several interrelated economic questions, such as those posed in a paper by the ZEW titled “The Effects of Lottery Prizes on Winners and their Neighbors” by Peter Kuhn et al. The paper examines the effect of the Dutch Postal Lottery on consumer spending habits among both participants and nonparticipants. It essentially seeks to test theories arguing that the rewards will be treated as cash transfers and that shocks to neighbors’ incomes will lead to changes in one’s consumption patterns. The skills acquired over the course of my undergraduate studies in classes like Introduction to Econometrics and Economics of Inequality and on my senior thesis in economics “The Effects of Monetary Policy Centralization on Fiscal Multipliers in the Eurozone” will be employed and tested daily. Chief among these will be my ability to draft regression models and then translate them for use into the data-analysis software Stata. In doing so, I will be testing many of the economic theories I have learned throughout my undergraduate career. My internship would last for approximately two and a half months from the middle of June until the end of August.

Beyond my academic studies, my non-academic activities at Notre Dame have also well prepared me for this internship. Since fall semester 2015, I have worked as a research assistant under Professor Wengle in the political science department. Her research focused on the agricultural sector in

post-Soviet countries. I was responsible for finding data sets, reviewing legislative actions in relevant countries, and consulting prior literature, among my other responsibilities. In doing so, I learned how to establish and develop a research question in greater detail than my previous experience allowed. It was this experience that sparked my interest in pursuing a career in research. My time with her was crucial in helping to develop general research strategies and a foundation for such research work.

Additionally, during January and February of my junior year, I worked as a teaching intern in a classroom of refugee students in Canisius-Kolleg, a Catholic school in Berlin. While there, I worked to assist refugee and migrant students as they learned German and Mathematics and led many of their English lessons. I had virtually no teaching experience prior to this internship and my knowledge of German was still relatively elementary, but I was nonetheless able to flourish. It was here that I was able to develop many “soft skills”. Communication was certainly the largest—not only because of my difficulties communicating with the students who were still learning German and who spoke no English, but also in my discussions with teachers and administrators. I learned how to negotiate with a variety of people from different backgrounds in terms of both nationality, age, and position. The biggest testament to my success, however, was the performance of the students. Students made noticeable improvements in their academic skills, English included, throughout my time there. I see this research-focused internship at ZEW as the flip side of the teaching-focused internship as well as the natural progression of my previous research-focused activities.

This internship at ZEW would be extremely beneficial for advancing my professional goals. In the long-term, I hope to attend the University of Mannheim to receive a master’s degree in Economics and then return to the United States to complete a doctoral program. Participation in this internship will be central in preparing me for a research-focused PhD program. Furthermore, the University of Mannheim is ranked among the best universities in Germany for economics, and an internship at ZEW would give me insight into the master’s program as well as the opportunity to form valuable professional connections. I would be able to learn more about what a career as a researcher or professor would mean and open the way for potential career paths after my degree. I believe this final step is crucial in determining whether a career either in academia or as a researcher is truly a viable option for me.

My internship at Germany is the best next step in achieving my professional goals. Bolstering and broadening my previous experience, it would prepare me for what I hope to do in the future. Beyond career preparation, I also find that the work would be extremely interesting. Funding for my internship from the Nanovic Institute is what I need to make this possible.