

Partnership with global energy efficiency company leads to student internships abroad

by Kayde Kempen - Thursday, May 22, 2014

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University of Wisconsin Oshkosh chemistry major and men's basketball player Michael Patt's first time outside of the United States came through his internship with the Viessmann Group working in a laboratory in Germany.

"It wasn't a typical internship, where I was just a go-fer," Patt said. "They asked me what I wanted to learn about. It gave me the opportunity to make mistakes and be guided by my mentor in the lab."

Patt was one of five UW Oshkosh students to participate in the first group of students to intern in Germany with the Viessmann Corporation during summer 2013.

College of Letters and Science Dean John Koker said the Viessmann Corporation has provided opportunities for students in the way of paid internships to get firsthand experience in working with an international company.

"It's an unmatched opportunity for a student to have the opportunity to work in a world class lab before they graduate," Koker said. "In addition, they have a chance to work with and be mentored by top scientists in the field."

"I couldn't have asked for a better opportunity," Patt said. "I brought back a lot of knowledge and experience I can use in my job at the ERIC lab."

Patt works in the Environmental Research and Innovation Center (ERIC) lab at UW Oshkosh as a lab technician doing chemical and biological testing for the biodigester, as well as water testing for counties in Northeast Wisconsin.

"In Germany, I worked with a lead chemist, who showed me the necessary procedures to get our ICPOES machine certified in the ERIC lab," Patt said.

The ICPOES (Inductively Coupled Plasma Optical Emission Spectroscopy) machine is used to analyze the elements in samples. Patt is using the skills and information he brought back from Germany to help the ERIC lab get its ICPOES machine certified, which is a long and rigorous process.

In addition to using his internship training in the ERIC lab, Patt also gained communication skills working with people he had never met and working through a language barrier.

"It was awesome to have an internship with such a huge company," Patt said. "To work with chemistry experts is invaluable and adds to the experience of working in a large lab."

The Viessmann Corporation partnership started with its Wisconsin-based subsidiary BIOFerm Energy Systems with the construction of the UW Oshkosh dry fermentation anaerobic biodigester, which produces 8 percent of the energy used by UW Oshkosh, and has since grown to a Viessmann Endowed Chair in Sustainable Technology.

“When we bought the biodigester from Viessmann, we talked about the University’s and Viessmann’s shared vision of sustainability and how we can make our education as impactful and available to students as possible,” Greg Kleinheinz, College of Letters and Science associate dean, said.

Students from UW Oshkosh go to Germany for as part of the Viessmann partnership for either a one-week seminar or an eight week internship, giving them an opportunity to address different perspectives and see sustainability at a global level.

“In the 100-plus year history of the campus, this partnership in renewable energy, student exchanges and the faculty position is one of the most impactful,” Kleinheinz said.

As the University moves forward with its partnership with Viessmann, Koker said the goal to keep student experiences and student learning a top priority.

“This is all about educating the next generation to be equipped to continue to develop sustainable technologies,” Koker said.

Learn more:

- [Environmental Research and Innovation Center](#)
- [College of Letters and Science](#)