



University of Pittsburgh

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Setting Yourself Apart

Greetings! After reflecting about my transition from undergrad to working in the chemical industry, I believe that I can attribute a lot of my success to the steps that I took to set myself apart from my fellow peers.

While attending a large research school such as Pitt, it often felt like an uphill battle trying to stand out in the crowd. Everyone has their own unique experiences at school, but I know it can sometimes feel easy to become a “cookie cutter” student, and take only the necessary classes and requirements to graduate. It wasn’t until the summer before my junior year that, after unsuccessfully landing an internship in my field (even after sending out close to 120 applications), I realized the last two years of my college career would be the make-or-break period to finding a good job after graduation.

During the latter half of college, I made it a goal to take at least one bonus chemistry related course a semester, and also pursue both research and TA opportunities when they fit into my schedule. I knew by that point that I wanted to go straight into the chemical industry after graduation, so I took classes that related to materials and polymer chemistry, and eventually nanosciences and nanoengineering courses during my senior year. I also took the Safety in the Chemical Laboratory course, where the information you get from that class is applicable to literally any lab setting you wish to pursue after college. Classes like those are excellent resume boosters to show employers your willingness to go above and beyond, and that you can do it safely in a GMP environment.

I also feel that my research and TA positions gave me valuable knowledge that helped me finally get an internship, as well as become self-sufficient in a lab setting. Being able to get your work done with minimal supervision is a huge way to differentiate yourself in a competitive job market. Pitt students are also very fortunate in that they can get hands-on experience with various analytical equipment. Many of the chemists I know from smaller colleges had never even seen an NMR before, nor had the opportunity to work with GCs and HPLCs until after graduation. Having that experience right out of school is a huge asset.

In summary, I firmly believe that any classes you take, or extracurricular activities you are a part of, are so important in exemplifying talent to potential employers. There is never a right or wrong, but jumping on every opportunity you can will only help you grow as a person. I hope this advice helps, and I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

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Pitt Chemistry Class of 2020

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