

NYSF Recap – Daniel Scipioni

Over the Christmas break, Ruairi and I were privileged to take part in the National Youth Science Forum at the Australian National University in Canberra. Here we got to live on campus for 12 days with roughly 200 other like-minded students from right across the country. For the program, we got to elect an interest area – which would form the basis for many of the STEM visits and specialist lectures that we attended. These interest groups included:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Engineering
- Health & Medical Science
- Computer Science
- Environmental Science, Sustainability & Ecology

Ruairi and I both thoroughly enjoyed the experiences from our respective interest groups. Being in the physics group - the particle accelerator was a clear winner for Ruairi, which was closely followed by the CERN video conference and QUESTACON visit. For me – being in the health and medical science group, I particularly enjoyed our visit to the John Curtin School of Medical Research – where we learnt about immunology, neuroscience, genomics, and got to see different experiments in action being performed on mice. Additionally, we also visited the University of Canberra. Here we learnt about medical imaging technology, nursing, got to plaster each other's arms, as well as learnt about pharmacology – which I particularly enjoyed. For the pharmacology visit, we got to make our own menthol cream, as well as investigated a range of pain-killers – looking at their effectiveness and the potential side-effects of taking them. Additionally, one final highlight was getting to go inside an ambulance. Here we got to speak to various paramedics about life on the job, perform CPR on a dummy, as well as got to see how a typical ambulance is 'decked out' so to speak.

While the STEM and lab visits were a significant highlight, so too was the networking and social aspects of the program. It was really great to get to meet a large contingent of like-minded individuals from across the country who share a similar interest and passion for science. I can definitely say that through the program I have made life-long friends - many of those coming from my particular interest group, with whom I grew really close to over the two weeks. Coming to think of it, the students I met on this program will be the future science leaders of Australia, and I know that should I pursue a career in science, I will be bound to cross paths with many of the people I met on session.

And so, with this, for any student considering a career in STEM, I would definitely encourage you to consider taking part in this program in the future. It enables you to gain valuable insight into what a career in science looks like, the different careers in STEM, a taste of university life and living on campus, and is also a massive door opener – as evidenced with partner's day, where we had partners of the NYSF such as: Bayer, CSL, Lockheed Martin, CSIRO, Cochlear and

ResMed come and talk to us. In addition to this, we also listened to presentations and received many 'freebies' from the multiple university sponsors of the program, such as: ANU, UQ, UNSW, Macquarie Uni, Monash University, and the University of Melbourne in a bid to try and win us over.

All in all, the program was an incredible experience. It has opened up so many doors and I can truly say that I have made lifelong friends. In the months leading up to the program, I had heard from previous NYSF'ers that it was one of the most amazing things that they have ever done. To be honest, I was a bit sceptical of this, however; was really glad to be proven wrong.

Ruairi and I would both really like to thank Ms Black for all her support and guidance throughout what was a really rigorous application process. Without her, I would never have known the program existed, let alone, be able to take part in it. We would both also like to thank Ms Schuster for her encouragement and support along the way.

On one final note, I would like to wish Ruairi all the best. Ruairi concluded his time at the college at the end of last year, and midway through session, his family actually moved into their new home up in Brisbane. It was great to be able to share this experience with him on what was his final tenure for the college.

Daniel Scipioni