



# Engineering an Appreciation for Spanish Culture

## Kurt Johnson, Mechanical Engineering, 2021

Cultural  
Exploration

### SUMMARY

*For 8 weeks this past summer I lived and worked full time in Barcelona, Spain. I was placed at JR Sistemas de Seguridad (JR Security Systems) where I designed remotes on Solidworks autoCAD software and prototyped my designs using a 3D printer. Through my work I accomplished my goal of getting some relevant engineering experience. Aside from my actual work duties, I was able to gain a greater appreciation for culture and language, which was one of my other goals going into the experience. The other interns at my company were from China, and between them and my Spanish coworkers I grew to appreciate language and cultural differences, though it made it difficult for me to communicate. I also got to go to a lot of cities throughout the country and learn about the history of each place.*



### SPICES

*This experience allowed me not only the opportunity to visit a foreign place, but to form a much deeper bond to its culture through living there for an extended period of time. Being able to learn the history, explore the language, and sink into city life allowed for real and meaningful connections to form.*

### HERBS

*Throughout this experience, I tried to keep in mind that this was not my home. In doing so I tried to adapt myself to the local language and culture so that they would not have to adapt themselves to me. While I did not succeed all of the time, the effort was appreciated.*

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

*Adaptability and resilience was a key part of my study abroad. I was homesick after 4 weeks abroad, and keeping myself motivated to conquer the rest of the experience, on top of working and doing excursions, was difficult. I also relied heavily on independent learning, both in and out of the workplace. My boss was very hands off, so the work I did was largely on my shoulders. I also had to learn how to navigate Barcelona by myself and how to communicate, which was both independent learning and intercultural confidence.*



### IMPACT

*This experience's primary impact is on me. Spending 8 weeks working in Barcelona allowed me a chance to discover who I am when everything familiar is stripped away. I had the chance to grow and appreciate a culture in a way I had never been able to before. It also allowed me to grow professionally by giving me some valuable work experience. I hope I can extend this impact to other Top Scholars and UTSA students by talking about my experience and helping others seeking similar programs.*

### ADVICE

*Do not be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. It will always pay off to do experiences like this, even if it is hindsight. I was terrified to go abroad, but I did, and I was able to grow through the experience.*