



## Intern Spotlight: *September 2009*

Kathleen (Katie) Foote | Farmington, CT | 2010 | Physics Secondary Education & Applied Physics  
*Summer 2009 Research Assistant Intern*  
National Science Foundation, Minneapolis, MN

### What motivated you to do an internship?

Junior year, I started to think about going to graduate school for a doctorate in physics education. Doing research in my area of interest would allow me to see if I wanted to pursue the PhD, and if physics education was the area for me.

### How did you find your internship?

The National Science Foundation lists Research Experience sites on their website. I applied to several sites and chose the program at Minnesota because of the location and the reputation for the physics education group.

### What did you like best about the internship?

The best part of the internship was being able to talk freely with graduate students and professors at the University. Everyone welcomed me warmly and it was great to have plenty of resources for guidance and advice.

### What did you like the least?

I ended up repeating many of the same analyses for most of the summer. It would have been interesting to experiment with a variety of types of research instead of restricting myself to quantitative, statistical analyses. On the other hand, I enjoyed exploring a topic extremely in depth and pursuing a project from start to finish.

### What skills did you gain from the internship?

I learned how to organize a large amount of information and how to form a systematic plan for finding meaningful patterns in the data. I became familiar with new statistical software and fully explored Excel's tools for presenting my graphs in tables and charts. Most importantly, in writing my final papers and putting together a summary poster, I learned to pick out my most important findings and concisely convey my results.

### How has this internship affected your future career/grad school plans?

This summer reinforced my plan to go to graduate school and pursue a PhD in physics education. Speaking to graduate students gave me a picture of what graduate school is like and I found that I could see myself undertaking that lifestyle. Furthermore, I have an idea of the schools I want to apply to after networking with graduate students at various institutions.

### How would you rate this internship 1-5?

Definitely a 5. In addition to my research being rewarding, I had the opportunity to explore another corner of the country. I attended seminars in contemporary physics research areas and applying to graduate school. On weekends, I explored nearby museums, public parks and sporting events. I met wonderful people who had similar aspirations for the future.

### Would you recommend that PC students participate in internships in general? Why or why not?

Internships are an invaluable opportunity for students to explore potential career paths. Not only can a student get an idea for the daily life in that field but also students can talk to people in the profession for advice and recommendations. Whether at the end of the internship, a student decides that the field is one they want to pursue or abandon; they gain valuable information about their own interests and how well their personality fits in their field of interest.