

See original version in German here: <https://projekt.bht-berlin.de/elba/testimonials-from-bht>

The ELBA program was one of the greatest journeys of my life so far. Rarely have I had the opportunity to experience and discover so much in such a short time. My trip to the USA allowed me to immerse myself in a culture that was previously foreign to me and experience first-hand what it means to attend an American college. For five months, I swapped my everyday life as a food technologist studying for a bachelor's degree at Berliner Hochschule für Technik for life at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ).

The College of New Jersey is the number one public university in the state and offers students numerous resources. I had always wanted to study abroad, so I decided to complete my internal internship at TCNJ. I had the opportunity to assist Dr. Peel with her research in the fields of genetics and cell biology. This work opened up a whole new area of biology for me. In her laboratory, Dr. Peel studies the effect of post-translational modification on the function of microtubules using the model organism *C. elegans*. Although I had not previously come into contact with this topic and my degree program focuses on other areas, Dr. Peel's attentive supervision gave me a deep insight into cell biology. At first, I found it difficult to understand the background because there was so much new information to take in. During the first two weeks, I had to learn the basics and get used to the lab. After that, I was able to work independently most of the time. The new work environment was sometimes overwhelming, but it also encouraged me to develop my own working methods and to engage intensively with my projects. Dr. Peel involves many students in her research and maintains close contact with them. The atmosphere in the lab was always relaxed and everyone was very understanding and helpful. I felt very comfortable because both the students welcomed me very openly and Dr. Peel never lost patience with me.

The early days were often overwhelming, as I was flooded with new impressions. Traveling from the Berlin to the suburbs of Trenton was a drastic change for me.

One of the great luxuries of the program is the accommodation in the guest house. Living together with the other exchange students greatly enriched my stay and made it easier for me to settle in. Together, we went on numerous trips, most of them to New York. Experiencing this incredibly vibrant city was one of the highlights of my entire stay. Since it is difficult to get around without a car, the weekends usually turned into travel adventures. Despite this, I managed to visit cities such as Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, and Los Angeles during my five months there.

In Ewing itself, where TCNJ is located, there is little to do, which is why most students spend most of their time on campus. The range of leisure clubs and events on offer is huge and very diverse. Most of the people I met were very open and treated me with friendly curiosity. The number of exchange students at TCNJ is small, but a lot was done to help us integrate. In a panel discussion, we had the opportunity to share our experiences and encourage American students to study abroad as well.

I am very grateful for all the experiences I have had here. My time in New Jersey presented me with many challenges and forced me to leave my comfort zone. I gained exciting insights in the laboratory, made many new friends, and was able to experience everyday life on the other side of the world. I would recommend the program to anyone who has the opportunity to participate.