

## **Final Laidlaw Reflection**

After finishing my final Laidlaw report a few months ago, I can say with certainty that my experience as a Laidlaw Scholar will be something I will forever and look back on as one of the greatest opportunities of my young life. In all honesty, I discovered the Laidlaw Scholarship somewhat accidentally. I initially did not consider searching for summer research opportunities, as I did not realize anything like the Laidlaw Scholarship – something that allowed students to independently pursue their own unique interests – was available to undergraduates, never mind those in their first and second years of study. The prospect of having such free reign over one's studies while being supported by a wider network was intriguing, and, even after all of this time, I am still so grateful to have been chosen for this experience.

Though often very challenging, both academically and mentally, my time researching architecture's roles in the Nazi Party in Germany has been immensely rewarding, and significantly improved my skills as a researcher and writer. In addition to expanding these skills, because the scholarship entails that one will pursue a single topic for an extended time period, I was able to delve into one of my interests to an extent I had never had the chance to do previously. This exposed me to completely new methods of research and exploration that, with the help of my advisor Peter Sealy, allowed me to improve as an overall scholar and challenge myself with a much higher level of academic rigor.

Beyond the opportunity to pursue multi-week research independently, the Laidlaw Scholarship also allowed me to travel solo throughout Germany as part of my research. I had never traveled alone before, and making my way through Berlin, Nuremberg, Munich, Dachau, Schleiden, and Frankfurt pushed me out of my comfort zone in the best of ways. I have always considered myself an independent person, but being completely alone for such a long period, particularly while studying such an emotionally-draining subject, presented me with an entirely new set of challenges. By the end, I had a far greater understanding of both my subject matter and the importance of exploring important subjects despite the emotional difficulty they may bring.

These enriching academic experiences, combined with the leadership training provided by Laidlaw, have made me a more confident, self-aware, and capable person. Beyond the skills I have learned through independent work, Laidlaw has given me a greater understanding of the importance of balancing independence with teamwork. Particularly given the numerous fields studied by my year's cohort, this leadership training has taught me how success, while greatly dependent on one's own work, cannot be achieved through solidarity. Instead, the best results come from utilizing the full range of a group's abilities – from both helping others in need and knowing when you yourself must ask for it. I look forward to seeing the work of future Laidlaw Scholars, and am so happy to know that this wonderful program will so greatly aid future students at the University of Toronto for years to come.