

My Laidlaw Scholar Experience

When I reflect on my journey with the Laidlaw Scholars Undergraduate and Research Program, one thing is clear: it was anything but boring or uninspiring. In fact, the diversity of experiences and the friendships I made along the way have shaped me in ways I couldn't have anticipated. The EPFL 2023-2024 Laidlaw cohort became more than just a group of peers, we traveled, laughed, and learned together, sharing moments that enriched both our academic and personal lives. It's hard to believe all that I achieved during this program, but I feel incredibly grateful for the lessons and memories I've gained.

One of the most impactful parts of the program was the research project I undertook in my first summer. I spent eight weeks working on a project titled "Synthesis of Copper-Nickel Bimetallic Nanocrystals," aimed at advancing research on the carbon dioxide reduction reaction (CO₂RR). The process of synthesizing these nanocrystals was both challenging and rewarding. I learned how to control the size and elemental composition of the particles. This experience not only deepened my understanding of scientific methods but also highlighted the importance of teamwork. Presenting our findings to a scientific and general audience further reinforced the need to balance complex information with clarity.

But this journey wasn't solely about research. A crucial aspect of the program was leadership development. Through various workshops, we refined our leadership skills and applied them in real-world settings. For instance, during my Leadership in Action, which I spent with Social Futures, an organization committed to achieving positive social change in communities like Lismore, Australia. This was a humbling and eye-opening experience. Witnessing how Social Futures responded to the evolving needs of communities in crisis highlighted the importance of adaptability and empathy.

The work with Social Futures also pushed me to examine my own biases and improve my communication skills. Interacting with people who had experienced trauma, especially after natural disasters, gave me a new perspective on the mental health challenges these events bring. It became clear to me that supporting communities isn't just about providing immediate help but also about creating long-term, compassionate responses that allow people to recover and thrive.

Through both the research and leadership components of the Laidlaw program, I proved to myself that growth happens when you're pushed out of your comfort zone. These experiences have reinforced my commitment to continuing this kind of work, whether in the lab or out in the field. I've also realized how easy it is to get caught up in the challenges and

excitement of new experiences, but having a strong foundation of values and a supportive community, ensures that you stay grounded and focused on your long-term vision

In the end, the Laidlaw program gave me more than just academic achievements. It offered me a complete experience of learning, leading, and connecting with others. It's an experience that I will carry with me into the future, both professional and personal.