

FARM: Intern experience invaluable

By Angel Caro, Special to this Newspaper | Posted: Thursday, July 20, 2017 12:15 am

My name is Angel Caro. I am 21-years-old and am from Calexico. I am also an Imperial Valley College student looking forward to graduating at the end of the fall semester with an associate's degree in Agricultural Science. I am one of two IVC students who were accepted to work on a U.S. Department of Agriculture internship program. When I first heard about the internship opportunity, I did not want to apply for it. In my head I thought that I was not going to be able to get it, so why should I even apply for it? However, I must thank my friends and family for making me apply anyway.

For the last two months, I have been working on my 360 intern hours at the University of California Cooperative Extension office in Holtville. I am getting very close to 180 hours, and I am enjoying it so far. I have been able to learn a lot of new things about different agricultural subjects. For example, I have learned a lot of plant science from Dr. Oli Bachie and my co-workers. I have also learned a lot about the importance of teaching and working with youth from 4-H Program Representative II Shanna Abatti. In addition, Dr. Pratap Devkota has helped me learn more about weeds, and how to deal with them.

There are many things to do at Cooperative Extension. I usually work three days a week, and every day I work on a different project. On Tuesday's, I work with the 4-H program. I head out every Tuesday to Faith Academy in Imperial. What I get to do there is work on an after school/summer program. I work with a group of 23 kids from preschool to fourth grade. I help the kids do little science projects. Some of the activities we have done are; ice cream, slime, bouncing balls, making new paper, water rockets and more. The goal of the program is for the kids to become more interested in science, and most of the kids seems to be loving the program. This has been my first time working with kids and I was really nervous about how I was going to manage them. Luckily, the teachers and assistants in the academy have been a great help.

On Wednesday's, I get to work in agriculture, my true interest. I do one of two things; work outside in the fields or work in the lab. I like to work both places to be honest. The most recent project that we had was an alfalfa project. My co-workers and I worked on this project for a month. During this time, we headed out to specific alfalfa fields to do flower clusters and flowers per cluster counts. We also evaluated the amount of weeds and number of pests per field. In addition, we got alfalfa samples from the fields and brought them to the lab. In the lab we labeled brown bags and coin bags 1-50 and added the name of the field from which the samples were taken. Then we separated eight trifoliolate leaves from the stem, and put the leaves in the coin bag. The stem would then go in the brown bag. All the samples were then shipped to another lab where they were analyzed. The purpose of the alfalfa project was to see the compactivity of the leaves'

genes to the seeds' genes. This would determine if the bees are doing a good job of spreading alfalfa pollen across the field.

Some Thursday's, I work on weed science. I have not worked on this subject too much. So far I have only been assigned to separate good seed from bad seed and put the good seed in containers. I am sure I will be working on weed science more. I cannot wait to see what I get to do and what I learn from it.

Working on the USDA internship program has turned out to be very good experience for me. I have worked on things I really enjoy so far. I have also learned many things that I was not able to learn in the classroom setting. I am very excited about what I get to do and learn during the 210 hours that I have left.

This internship will be of great help when I transfer to a university. With the experience that I will have gained by the end of the internship, I will be more prepared to start working on a bachelor's degree in agriculture. If given the opportunity, I would encourage other ag students at IVC to apply for any available internships out there.