This summer I had the opportunity to work as the environmental health and safety intern for the EHSS department at Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc. (BIVI) in Fort Dodge, Iowa. BIVI is the animal health division of the global and family-owned Boehringer Ingelheim, and is a leader in animal health research and products including vaccines and pharmaceutical solutions for six animal species.

Working within the EHSS department, I was able to gain valuable and hands-on experience working with a wide range of environmental health fields including biosafety, environmental studies, hazardous and biohazardous waste, spill and emergency response, industrial hygiene, respiratory protection, confined space, and site audits which encompass all of those things in one way or another.

I had the opportunity to work with an incredibly knowledgeable and well-rounded department built with individuals who each have their own areas of expertise. I was given the flexibility and openness to be involved in as much as I wanted to see and contribute to.

Some of the larger projects I was able to accomplish over the summer included editing and updating the Respiratory Protection Program for both the Fort Dodge and Saint Joseph facilities and conducting in-house training at the Fort Dodge facility, completing industrial hygiene sampling and analysis, including sound level monitoring and personal air exposure, organizing and updating the 2016 Laboratory Chemical Inventory for the R&D, QC and BPD departments, and updating the confined space document listing and creating a photo inventory of confined spaces and PRCS on site.

My time at BIVI has taken what I have learned from our EH program and applied it to the workforce. Boehringer Ingelheim’s internship program, company values and the compassionate and hard-working individuals I have gotten to know this summer is something I will remember for a lifetime. This internship is best fit for someone who is independent, self-motivated and not afraid to ask for new opportunities or questions based on curiosity. There are times for team work, but also times for independent projects that you have to take control of on your own. The giant facility may scare you at first, but you can never go wrong with taking your map with you, admitting to being lost in the maze of production and asking for help; they’ve all been new to the place at some point too. 😊