

START: My Personal Experience With Aging Research

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START Program

During my time at the University of Illinois, I hoped to get involved with academic research, especially within the field of Speech and Hearing Sciences. When I discovered the START program, I decided to apply because I believed that it was the perfect opportunity for me. Being accepted to the program would allow me to grow as a student and develop my knowledge in aging research. In the START program, I was provided with a vast amount of resources. Through weekly seminars, my knowledge of aging and research has expanded greatly. I was also provided with support from one-on-one mentoring from a Graduate student mentor. Through the START program, I was able to be placed into the ADAPT lab and gain hands-on experience in research.

ADAPT Lab

Led by Professor Shannon Mejia, the Adult Development, Adaption and Technology (ADAPT) Lab focuses on ways in which technology can impact the health and successful aging in older adults. The lab was divided into several different project teams, and at the end of the week the lab would come together as a whole to discuss the development of each individual project. Additionally, we would engage in discussions regarding technological developments in relation to health care.

Fireplace Project

Within the ADAPT Lab, I was involved in the Fireplace Project team. This project was designed in collaboration with the Napoleon Fireplace company, and its purpose was to determine how technology can impact enrichment seeking in older adults. The research study focused on examining how games could support cognitive health and healthy aging in adults midlife and beyond.

Within the lab, I was trained to conduct primary data collection in a research study. I was able to familiarize myself with several different programs including REDCap and Amazon Polly. Additionally, I took part in the recruitment team. This process involved contacting potential participants via phone call. In these calls, we would screen for eligibility in the study. If eligible, scheduling their appointment for the study would follow.

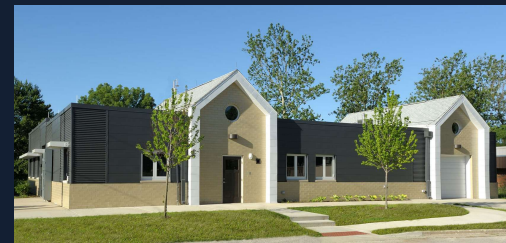
Reflection

The START program has been an enriching experience in my academic career. Prior to entering the program, I had no experience in research, and was unsure on how to get involved. I applied in order to see if I could engage with research. The START program offered me a plethora of resources and guidance. Initially, I was uncertain about my placement in the ADAPT lab, due to the lab falling under a different discipline than my own major. However, after spending a semester and a half being placed in the ADAPT lab, I am able to reflect on the knowledge and experiences I have gained. I am grateful that I was able to experience a research study from beginning to end by participating in both the recruitment process and the data collection process. Additionally, I do believe that I have gained a lot from my time in the START program and can now view health in aging in a broader context.

START

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The ADAPT Lab allowed me to participate in research conducted at the McKechnie Family LIFE Home.

