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Class of 2013  
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**F**orty degrees in May? In Chapel Hill, I was used to temperatures double that for this time of the year. However, Norway is world away from Chapel Hill, and apparently a much colder world. In May 2012, I arrived in Bergen, Norway to freezing air and cloudy skies. I was to spend three months interning at a climate research center, the Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research.

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## SIMULATING SCANDINAVIA: A LESSON IN CLIMATE MODELING

During the constant rain of my first week, I wondered if I had made a good decision to trade North Carolina's sunshine for Bergen's dreary weather. Once the sun finally emerged from behind the clouds, I learned that Carolina blue skies were just as possible in a little, coastal Norwegian town as in Chapel Hill. With a familiar sky above me, I began the summer of my Burch Fellowship.

My first days in Bergen were a blur. At work, I met dozens of people. I was teamed up with Dr. Stefan Sobolowski, an American researcher who moved to Norway a year prior. He introduced me to most of his coworkers and showed me around the building my first day at work. It was overwhelming, especially since I was still suffering the effects of jet lag. Between all the introductions, I learned about my project for the summer. The Bjerknes Centre and a Danish organization were



working together on a regional climate model for Scandinavia. The goal was to predict future weather patterns with a specific focus on how cities – particularly Oslo and Copenhagen – would be affected by increased precipitation, winds, and sea levels. My job was to work on the model validation, which means I compared the model output to measured data like temperature and precipitation. We wanted to make sure that the inner processes of the model were working correctly. If the model cannot reproduce past conditions, it will not be reliable when predicting the future.

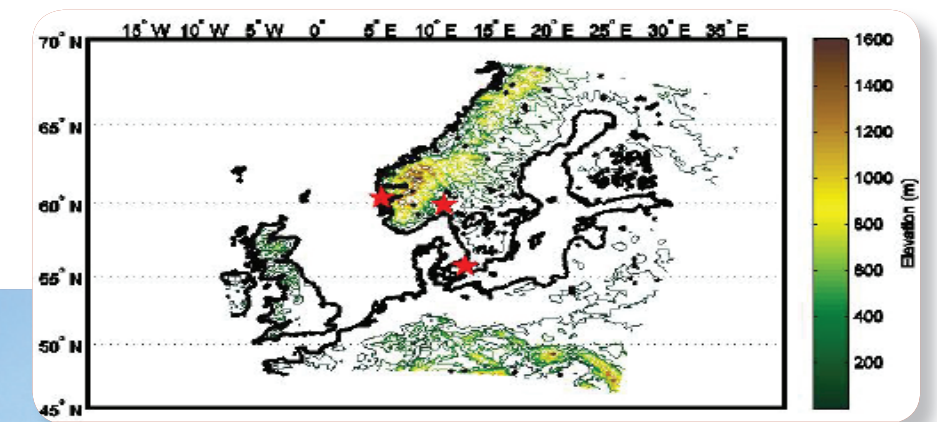
Prior to this summer, I did not have too much interaction with climate models. I was unaware of

their complexity and of the amount of collaboration required to create a climate model. Through working on this project, I found myself in a true academic setting for the first time and I got to enjoy the busy life of

a researcher. Meetings, papers to edit, presentations to attend – there was always something going on. This atmosphere brought people together from different backgrounds. It was so interesting to see the discussions that took place between climate modelers, paleoclimatologists, hydrologists, and others that worked at the Bjerknes Centre. I loved being a part of an academic environment and this summer helped me realize what I would like to do after I graduate from UNC.

Most importantly, though, is that my three months in Norway allowed me to grow as a person. Prior to my departure, I was terrified at the idea of being on my own all summer. However, I quickly learned that I was not alone. There were dozens of international students in my summer housing, and I met people from all over the world. We shared stories about our families and homes over group dinners, and it was wonderful to glimpse into other cultures. Plus, it was fun to teach everyone about North Carolina, which apparently is not a popular state to the international crowd. Now, though, they can tell their friends a little more about my home state.

Besides meeting new friends, my stay in Bergen helped me become more independent. Chapel Hill is only thirty minutes away from my home in Raleigh, so this summer



was a first chance to truly live on my own. I never felt discouraged from experiencing Bergen alone since the city feels safe and everyone

is helpful. Whether I needed directions downtown or translation help in the grocery store, everyone was willing to lend a hand. My new friends were great to spend time with, but if I wanted time alone, I could read by the lake at the center of town or hike up one of the seven mountains that surround the city. Though small, there was always something to do in Bergen, whether with friends or on my own.

Before I knew it, three months had passed and my time in Bergen was coming to an end. I was pleased with the skills I had gained at the Bjerknes Centre, including improved programming knowledge and an increased appreciation for climate modeling. I was most proud of myself for stepping out on my own, adventuring across the ocean to a country I had never been to before. Family members remarked how brave I had become in being able to move to a foreign country by myself. However, I like to think that bravery was inside me all along. All it took was an opportunity like my Burch Fellowship to reveal the courage within me.

