Van Andel Institute | www.vai.org

- Mark Farha (Biology, Community Health, 2015)
- Summer Research Intern
- Full-time, 40 hours per week
- Paid

What do you do as an intern at this organization?
I am working in the lab of structural sciences on a project involving the screening of a nanobody phage display library for a specific nanobody binder to AMP activated protein kinase. In addition to my daily activities relating to my project, I attend lab meetings, seminars and events with other interns.

How did you find your internship?
I gave a talk at the Institute in high school, and I was browsing through their website when I learned that they had a summer internship program, for which I decided to apply.

What do you enjoy most about your internship?
I very much enjoy the level of independence and the feeling that I am actually part of the research team. I am expected to give feedback at meetings, present my work regularly and get critiques, and attend various events that the institute has, just as the other researchers here do. It is a really hands on learning experience.

What do you find challenging?
The level of independence and the high expectations can be challenging at times. I would say the most challenging thing is adapting to the new lab environment and being able to cope with and learn from the imminent failures. To innovate and change things to get better results the next time is key.

What advice would you offer to someone who wants to make the most of an internship like yours?
Get into the search early! Many internships have application deadlines in the fall and winter (February 1 for this one). Also, go after positions where your strengths and past experiences will shine. I think I stood out from other candidates because of my past experience working in the exact field of the lab for which I applied. This may seem obvious but it is important to remember when filling out applications.

About the Organization
Van Andel Institute
Grand Rapids, MI

Founded by Jay and Betty Van Andel, Van Andel Institute’s goal is to have an impact world-wide on medical science and education. The Institute supports Van Andel Research Institute (VARI) and Van Andel Education Institute (VAEI) in achieving this goal. VARI conducts biomedical research, with a focus on cancer and Parkinson disease and with an emphasis on translating scientific research results into clinical applications. VAEI strengthens science education and prepares and motivates individuals to pursue science or science-related professions. Located in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan, the Institute has led the expansion of the life science industry in this region. Collaborative partnerships among world-class health care, research, and educational organizations have led to dramatic growth in the life sciences sector in the region, making Grand Rapids a career destination choice in this area.