

Final Forum report - Ronglei Sophia Liu

The two weeks at the Rotary National Science & Technology forum in Auckland were a memorable time for me. I have enjoyed the two weeks spent with students from around NZ, the advisors, the camp mum and dad, and everyone who accompanied us along the journey.

All objectives previously set were well achieved. I have solidified my career option in medicine, as I thoroughly enjoyed the Biomedical Science session - learning about and dissecting sheep hearts and lungs. I also enjoyed the Robotics session and considered becoming an engineer afterwards- a surprise. I was slightly confounded in the Applied Maths session, as I anticipated partaking in the maths we learned at school; instead, we talked about biology and modelled graphs on the computer - something I wasn't familiar with. It brought me a new perspective on Maths and its application, and I realised that I might not consider a mathematics major after all. The psychology session was a noteworthy end on the last day of modules. We learned the human brain's functions and maturation time, which explained why teenagers behave a certain way. This was helpful as I want to study the brain, specifically in medicine. I also enjoyed the Physics session, where the tutor talked about Nuclear fission, her research in Japan, and other physics-related experiments. Nuclear fission is still something that I'm enthralled with as it is the epitome of an advancing society with cutting-edge technologies, which lead us to infinite possibilities beyond imagination. The chemistry titration experiment was also a highlight - a procedure I was already familiar with at school and found that it is also helpful in Food Science as we titrated different concentrations of orange juices to identify their acidity. Except in Chemistry, the twist was that we measured the pH of the solution while titrating. All of the lab experiments sessions were useful in finding out whether we enjoyed immersing in the science labs earlier.

Debbie, the Chemistry tutor, was one of the funniest and most relatable chemists I've interacted with. She taught us chemistry, displayed chemical experiments, told us about her life story and gave advice for the future. It was indeed a wonder having met her. The speech delivered by Michelle on the first day of the Forum inspired and settled me that we have infinite possibilities and a bad start doesn't necessarily mean a bad life. I discovered that most scientific and technological careers were research and teaching based, which wasn't different from my impression. During one of the tech visits, though, we went out of the classroom and into the native bushes to collect data on plants and measure their growth. It was a refreshing and quite different experience from the rest, which gave me insight into working in the fields. The ESR forensic and NZ police tech visits were interesting, and I'm keeping Forensic Science as a backup study option! During the NZ police tech visit, we collected our own fingerprints with black ink and also dusted fingerprints of objects, which is a common procedure in criminal investigation. Dragon's Den challenge was a great way to build team spirit and practice group cooperation as we had to discuss and agree on one idea while everyone had their own opinion. I hope the future Forums also have something like this.

Social-wise, the Forum boosted my confidence, and I became more outgoing and less timid when talking to new people. It helped me with socialisation, as I found it a lot easier to converse with anyone after returning. Everyone was super friendly, and we had many more common conversation topics and inspirations. Having quit volleyball ages ago, the Forum let me pick up the sport again, and I found it entertaining and rewarding to play! Also, the cheering system for the volleyball games really revived my

ebbing enthusiasm for team sports. The talent show night was also a highlight; we prepared, put more than plentiful effort into it, and were very competitive - feeling the burning passion.

The advisor's team was superb; they did everything possible to help each of us while entertaining the herd and keeping track of every session. I admire their dedication to the Forum and am grateful for their presence in the two weeks of our lives, keeping us engaged and entertained. The daily schedule was well organised; every day was filled with activities to ensure we made the most out of the two weeks. The recreational activities and volleyball games were nicely integrated into the academic program. However, as much as I loved the schedule, getting more sleep would've been better. Many of us were a bit tired during the day in sessions, and I think we would get more out of the sessions if we were awake and attentive. Also, with a tight schedule, we had less time to focus on each activity, meaning that we couldn't accomplish one task to the best degree and most efficiently. Overall, I believe the operation of the Forum was well organised and executed.

In conclusion, The 2023 RSTF was a marvellous success and experience. I am very thankful to my school's Head of Science (Dr Murray Thompson) for nominating me to the Forum, the Dunedin Rotary Club's sponsorship, and everyone at the Forum who accompanied and assisted me along the journey.