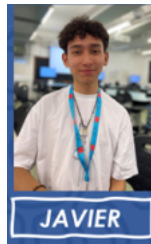


DEV NEURO ACADEMY CHAMPIONS

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By Javier Sanchez



“My name is Javier, and I am a DNA Champion” these were the opening words I used when introducing myself to the Dev Neuro Academy (DNA) 2023 cohort. After participating in the program during my 2022 summer, I decided to extend my involvement by becoming a DNA champion. This has granted me the privilege of continuing the program for another year, and so I decided to attend the 2023 summer school to lend a helping hand.

As a DNA champion, I got to see the inner workings and dedicated efforts behind the scenes. Engaging in conversations with tutors and professors, I discovered a planning process that begins months in advance with the aim of creating an unforgettable week for the year 12 students participating in DNA. During this captivating week of exploration, the sessions themselves left a lasting impression. While I had already completed some of them last year, what truly fascinated me was how much knowledge I had gained in just a year. I found myself collaborating with one of the brilliant scientists; together, we delved into discussions about the intricacies of the brain. I facilitated discussions between students and helped them learn about fascinating topics such as therapies involved in functional recovery and the intricate nervous connections between the brain and different organs, drawing on my A-level knowledge as well as my own reading on the brain I did in preparation for applying to university. It was a remarkable realisation of how far I had progressed in my scientific career. I was also amazed by how much new information I learned in only five days.

I was surprised to learn about the new sessions added to the program for the 2023 cohort. One particular session stood out as a clear favourite. It focused on 3D printing applications in medicine, a topic that has piqued my interest since year 12. In fact, I wrote my EPQ on this topic, so hearing from a passionate PhD scientist who actively used 3D printing to print custom-made bones was extremely

interesting. In addition, we went to the Science Gallery London and the Museum of Life Sciences, where we were immersed in exhibitions that sparked conversations about AI and evolution.

Aside from the amazing workshops, returning to summer school was a great way to practice a variety of skills. As a tutor for the group project, I was able to put my leadership skills to the test with a fantastic group of year 12 students. The experience of being their tutor created a strong bond between us, and we have kept in touch even after the summer school ended. It has been an honour to assist some of them in answering questions about their journey into year 13, and I hope to provide guidance as they navigate the challenging path of university applications.

The opportunity to assist these bright individuals has been immensely rewarding. I had a fantastic experience as a DNA Champion at the 2023 summer school. It has been an unforgettable journey of learning, growth, and making lifelong connections. I cannot wait to see what the future holds with DNA, and I hope to continue championing the cause of science and education.