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Two Mount Mercy Students Complete Junior Robotics Surgery Program

Not many high school students would choose to take classes over the summer. For most summer classes are seen as punishment for not doing well during the school year. However Mount Mercy seniors Julia Acosta (Buffalo) and Alexis Sandor (Buffalo) voluntarily completed an application for the Roswell Park Junior Robotics Surgery Program and were two of the 60 applicants who were selected for the program.

After completing an application which included information about academics, community service, short answer questions and two essays, as well as securing recommendations, the two seniors took part in a five week program.

Roswell Park trained the students in the Fundamental Skills of Robotic Surgery (FSRS), the method used to train robot-assisted surgeons at Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Students in the program explored much of the FSRS curriculum and participated in sessions that “that support and enhance their passion for the medical field, led by experts in visual arts, education, engineering, and creativity. Finally, students will attend presentations on ethics, compassion, leadership and teamwork through the program’s unique “Press On!” curriculum.”

Teaching Assistants led sessions for the students that discussed a wide-range of health-related topics such as health myths, advances in surgery, case studies and public health cases such as Love Canal in Niagara Falls. Sandor and Acosta also took a class on creativity where they discovered that creativity was something that could be learned. In order to enhance this valuable skill, the students spent a day at the Albright Knox Art Gallery where they learned to look at things from a different perspective. The program also allow the participants to spend time in the ATLAS Lab at Roswell Park, where they learned how to suture, do hand ties, practice peg transfers and cut with laparoscopic instruments. They also had the opportunity to use ROSS which is a Da Vinci practice simulator. The program culminated with the students able to spend time in the operating room using the Da Vinci Surgical System, practicing the skills that they had learned in the lab.

In addition to the science aspect of the program, they also spent time with an experienced high school guidance counselor and had the chance to complete the basic college application through the Common App. “This part of the program was extremely helpful,” Acosta commented. “Now I can go into my senior year with my college application basically completed.”

“I feel prepared to start senior year and I’m thankful that I won’t have to stress about completing the common app during the first few months of school,” Sandor added.

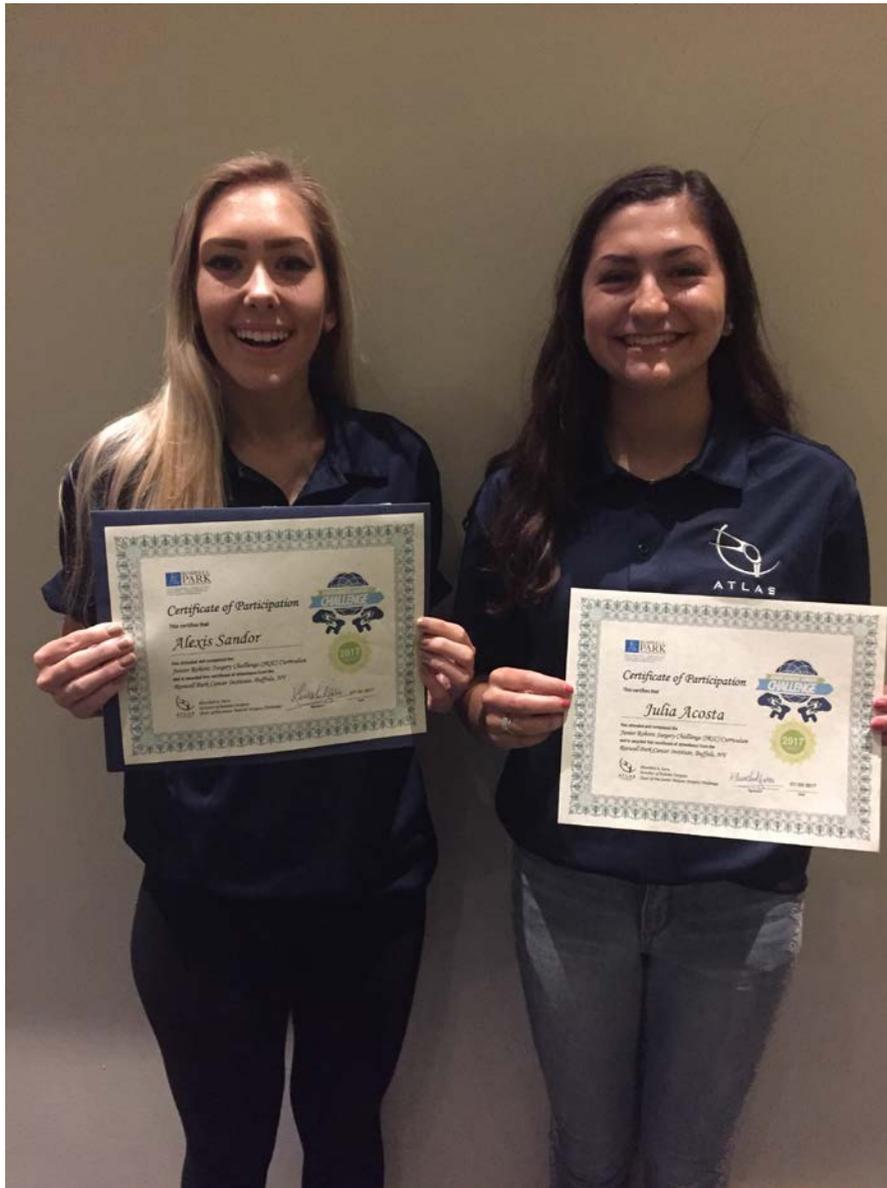
Acosta enjoyed the entire program but her favorite parts were making new friends who share similar interests and goals and practicing suturing open cuts and wounds on the world-renowned Da Vinci Surgical Robot. Sandor said “I enjoyed being able to actually go into an OR use the Da Vinci Surgical System just like a surgeon would. It was a surreal experience and has seriously changed the way I think about surgery. It is absolutely incredible how advanced these robots have become and it is only going to get better from here.”

Both students felt that the program was extremely beneficial. “Participating in the Junior Robotic Surgery Challenge helped me to further my educational goals by confirming that I want to pursue a career in the medical field,” Acosta remarked. “The program furthered my goals by making me want to push myself harder in my education so I will be able to get into the college and program of my choice. “

Sandor had the following insights about her experience, “Attending this program gave me better insight to all the possible careers there are in the medical field. It made me realize that you don’t have to be a doctor to make a change in someone’s life and that there are so many people needed to make a surgery go as planned. Teamwork and trust is very important in this field. Even outside of the OR, there are tons of people needed to make a hospital run as it should.”

This program was a logical next step for the two students who are members of Mount Mercy's Academy of Science and Healthcare. The Academy of Science and Healthcare offers a unique career internship program for students to experience different professions first hand. Students have the opportunity to interact with professionals in the field of their choice as well as have exposure to many other careers. Mount Mercy has teamed up with administration and staff at Mercy Hospital to create a vivid learning experience for the students who begin interacting with the professional community as freshmen through the Health Care Career Club and continue through the Academy of Science & Health Care.

"Attending this program gave me better insight into all the possible careers there are in the medical field. It made me realize that you do not have to be a doctor to make a change in someone's life and that there are so many people needed to successfully complete a surgery. Teamwork and trust is very important in the medical field," Sandor concluded.



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