REFLECTION ON RESEARCH IN GENETIC BIOINFORMATICS
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The week before the school shut down for the COVID-19 pandemic, I asked to start genetic bioinformatic research with Timothy Webster. At the time, I had no idea how important it was that I had approached him then, since my other research in the genetics lab would have to stop due to COVID. Being able to do this research online helped me to stay connected to my studies and have an amazing group of people to work with during this challenging time. Through this research I have learned the basics of coding and a bioinformatics platform to analyze microbiomes. I have been working on a research project analyzing reproductive skew in chimpanzees and bonobos. This work will be developed into a paper. Through working on this research, attending journal clubs, and our lab meetings, I have learned to critically read research papers. I have become more comfortable with discussing complicated topics and developing my own opinions on research papers, which I had a difficult time doing before. Through the lab, I have been able to connect with students from outside the university, which has been an incredible resource. I have listened to them present on their own research, which was inspiring and informative. I was concerned about virtual learning, but I have grown through having to be more resourceful. I am now more self-reliant and have learned to problem solve and find answers for myself. I have also learned when to ask for help and have been provided with a large group of knowledgeable people to ask, through the lab. Through this experience, I have learned how to do research from the start to the finish and most importantly, I have learned that I can do it. Research always seemed unreachable before but exposure to it has taken fear out of it. Through this experience, I have been inspired to be increasingly interested in research, even outside my field. I thought that because of COVID my research would not be able to continue. Instead I was able to continue learning and have a transformative experience, which has helped me to be more confident in my abilities and have a desire to continue research.