**Internship at UC San Diego**

My name is Carien Hilvering, and I have just graduated from my Master Infection & Immunity at the Graduate School of Life sciences (Utrecht University). The Nora Baart foundation supported me financially during my 8-month internship in San Diego, California (United States), where I was part of the microbiology laboratory of prof. dr. MD. Victor Nizet at the University of California, San Diego. My research focused on streptococcal cell wall carbohydrates, and how these carbohydrates influence virulence and pathogenicity of streptococci. This experience abroad is of great value to my scientific ànd personal development. I learned that the American scientific work culture differs in some aspects from our Dutch counterpart; new ideas are supported, and setbacks are dealt with in a positive way. On the contrary, I experienced a stronger hierarchy in the work field, and useful critical feedback is not as common as it is in the Netherlands. Besides my life in the lab, I experienced life outside of the lab: the importance of family life in the US, the enormous distances between home and work, and home and families. As a ‘working’ student, I sometimes felt it was hard to intermingle with established social networks, because I fell between two stools: the undergraduates and the PhD students. Last, but surely not least, I got the chance to behold the beautiful marine life in the Pacific Ocean, and enjoy the impressive Californian wild life and landscapes. I am very thankful that the Nora Baart foundation supported me in this experience, and helped me to progress in my scientific career. In January 2015, I will start as a PhD student in the group of Dr. Wouter de Laat at the Hubrecht Institute in Utrecht.

*Carien in front of the Scripps Instution of Oceanography pier at La Jolla shores (San Diego)*

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