

GROWERTALKS

Young Voices

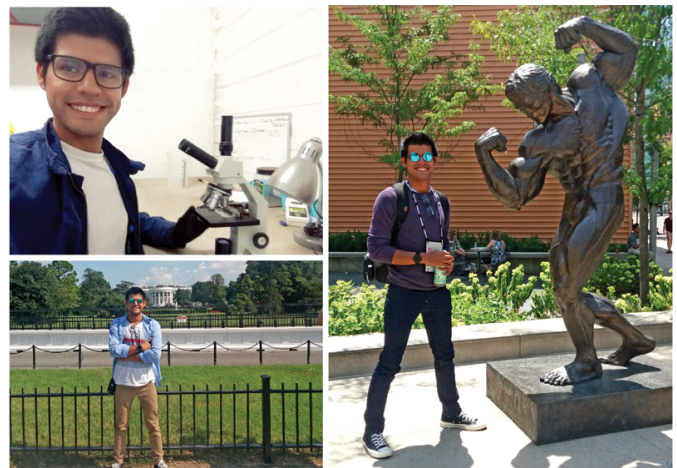
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A Journey for Your Own Connection

Sergio Leguía Vargas

I think when someone decides to start a new professional stage, they always have the uncertainty of what will come later, the challenges and the craving of wanting to know a bit of everything. When I decided to do an internship in the USA, a lot of people told me: “It’s another world.” “The idiomatic boundaries are tremendous.” “Are you crazy?” I just said, “Yes, I’m crazy.”

I decided it because I wanted to get new perspectives on my career out of a place I wasn’t used to, like my country Peru. But for that I had to break out of my comfort zone. So I applied to The Ohio Program, and after they accepted me for an internship at Battlefield Farms in Research & Development, I bought my flying tickets.



Pictured: Sergio interning in Research & Development at Battlefield Farms in Virginia. • One of Sergio’s favorite places to visit in the U.S. was Washington, D.C. • Sergio outside of the Columbus Convention Center during Cultivate’19.

It was a long journey of almost 15 hours, leaving behind the warm summer of Lima to arrive to the cold winter in Virginia. Since the beginning of my internship, the people of the company were very nice, trying to set everything up to make it more comfortable. The first month was for adaptation; everything looked so different—the cold days, including ice and snow; a new culture, another kind of food; and, of course, the famous “idiomatic boundaries.”

I have to admit that trying to follow the rhythm of the English language when you are a foreigner with another native language could be a little bit difficult at the beginning. But I got used to it. The people here were so nice since the beginning; they made me feel like this is my second home. Sharing new experiences with the native people and with the other interns makes this experience more enjoyable.

I was a little nervous for my first days of the training because it would be the first time that I would work with ornamental crops, but actually I felt very comfortable with it. “Every day, we do something different at the Research & Development Department” were the first words of my boss and that is true, luckily. There were days where we were installing field trials; the next day I was taking pictures of the results of other experiments; after that we were producing beneficial nematodes; the day after we were propagating plants by different methods. Every day I learned something new.

The people here work hard every day. I have heard before that “they are addicted to their work,” but the thing is that most of them are into it, a lot of them love their jobs and are living it with passion, and some of them are very good friends and hang out when they aren’t at their jobs. So what I think is that there are no gaps between work and their normal lives because it is an important part of their selves.

And day by day, week by week, I got adapted more and more. I would wake up at 6:00 a.m., drive to work, go home and in the afternoon I would have time for myself and hang out with my friends, going out to some show at town, meet new people from the USA and other countries. Some of the most amazing places I have been are the Smithsonian Museum, the White House and the Washington Monument.

We had the opportunity to go to Cultivate’19, an event where we spent five days in conferences, workshops, exhibitions and many other activities from kayaking, hiking, laser tag to salsa dance classes. And although I couldn’t improve my dance steps, I navigated the rivers and met very passionate people and that leaves me more than satisfied.

I can say that this kind of experience makes you feel more independent and confident about yourself, and makes you learn new things, and not only in the academic way—I learned how to cook and I have to say that Italian food is my specialty. I learned how to play the ukulele and other string instruments. I took pictures of Virginia’s flora and fauna as a hobby. I have enrolled in many online courses and I learned to drive a truck. The most important of all is that this experience gives you the space necessary to learn and understand yourself much better, to have the connection that sometimes we can’t get with ourselves because we are thinking that we are going to be always fine if we stay in our comfort zone.

I have to say that the first days here I wasn’t sure if this is what I was expecting, but now I can say that this is what I needed, what I wanted and what captivates me: my career, my passion and my life. And if you have the opportunity to explore other countries to expand your vision for what you are studying or doing, do it because you will find more than you expect you could find yourself. **GT**

Sergio Leguía Vargas interned at Battlefield Farms in Virginia and graduated from National Agrarian University La Molina in Lima, Peru.