Fast Track Program - Siddharth Somasundaram, Class of 2021

Hi! My name is Siddharth Somasundaram, and I'm a first-year Electrical Engineering major here at UCLA. I'm incredibly happy to be here, and thankful to have been admitted to the Fast Track Program. I've lived in Cerritos, CA my whole life, which is about 35 miles southeast from Los Angeles. I also lived in India for three years from the third to sixth grade.

Honestly, I had no idea that I would pursue Electrical Engineering until I applied for college about a year ago. However, it ended up making sense, considering my passion for intricate puzzles. For example, ever since I was young, I have played chess competitively, and I loved it. Over the years, the process of analyzing a position (defining the problem), developing a strategy to approach the problem (brainstorming ideas), and executing a plan move by move (building solutions) became ingrained in me.

In high school, I was the president of Mu Alpha Theta, our on-campus math club. Before graduating, I wanted to introduce as many new activities as possible for our members, so I decided to enter the Moody's Mega Math Challenge to encourage others to join as well. As a team of five, we were given 14 hours to complete a research paper to model rising sea levels over the next 10, 20, and 50 years. None of us had a very deep understanding of math and science beyond what was taught in our classroom, which could have been considered a limiting factor. However, I still really enjoyed creating a mess of math equations on 15 different boards, as we tried to differentiate different laws of thermodynamics and thermal expansion with respect to time to see how fast glaciers would melt. Even though our equations ended up being off by a factor of a thousand after 13 hours of work (ouch), I still believe that these types of experiences are really intellectually satisfying and worth the endeavour.

During high school, I never had the opportunity to take AP Computer Science, but I did take a course on Python programming on edx.org, which I really enjoyed. I love the logical intricacies that the computer science field poses, so I'm also considering switching to Computer Engineering. In the meantime, for my next few years in college, my goals are to obtain as much experience as I can and make meaningful contributions in research and industry that shape modern technology.

Down the line, I will decide if I want to pursue a M.S in Electrical Engineering and MBA and go into industry, or pursue a PhD and go into research. This will ultimately depend on which experiences stand out the most to me, in industry or research, at the end of my four years here. Regardless, I'm really excited to be a part of the engineering community at UCLA and see where these next four years take me!