

Fast Track Student of the Month January 2016

Karen Li



Interviewee: Karen Li
Interviewers: Tanya Al-Rehani and Cian Costello

Birthplace: Winnipeg, Canada

Schooling: Handsworth
Secondary School, North
Vancouver, Canada

Interests outside school:

Food adventures, shopping,
playing and listening to music,
hiking, snowboarding,
travelling with friends, and
putting maple syrup on
everything.



Siblings: 15-year-old sister
named Felicity

**When did you know you
wanted to be an EE?**

I was always interested in science as a kid, and like most future engineers, I played with LEGOs a lot. Moreover, in high school, I took woodworking classes and derived a lot of pleasure from building things with my own hands. However, I wasn't passionate about engineering until I started taking physics class in eleventh grade and really loved the subject. In particular, I enjoyed studying magnetism, and so by the time college applications rolled around the summer before senior year, I decided to choose Electrical Engineering as my major so I

could apply my love for physics to real world problems.



Who has influenced you the most in your choice of your academic field?

Rather than one specific individual, my family as a whole has influenced me in my choice of my academic field. My father has a PhD in Electrical Engineering and works as a software engineer; therefore, I have always been exposed to EE. My aunt has a degree in Chemical Engineering but works in management, thereby illustrating to me that an academic degree in engineering gives you the

opportunity to explore a variety of different careers. Furthermore, my grandfather was a chemical engineer and two of my cousins are currently studying engineering as well. Needless to say, engineering runs in the family, and I would love to continue the trend.

Why did you choose UCLA EE program?

I chose the UCLA EE program because UCLA is a top-notch school with a strong engineering program. Moreover, UCLA provides myriad opportunities for me to both challenge myself academically as well as have fun, since LA is one of the largest and most diverse cities in the world. In addition, UCLA's location in California is advantageous because it is close to the tech industries in LA, San Francisco, and Silicon Valley.



How has it been being on a big campus so far?

Surprisingly, the campus does not seem big and impersonal like the common stereotypes suggest. In the beginning, it's very easy to get lost on campus, but everyone here is friendly and I've personally gotten help with directions from plenty of strangers during my first quarter here. Furthermore, as you make more friends and meet more people, you definitely start to see familiar faces throughout the school. The classes themselves are also engaging

even though the sheer number of students in them may seem overwhelming at first. Lastly, I would say that my involvement in the IEEE (electrical engineering) club has no doubt helped foster a sense of community here for me at UCLA.



What are you interested in as a career?

Although I have not decided on a specific career yet, I would definitely like to work in the tech industry. Software development, joining a start-up company, and working in the renewable energy sector are all appealing paths for me.