

Blake Lazarine

December 2019 - UCLA Fast Track Program

Background:

Birthplace: Santa Barbara, California

High School: Dos Pueblos High School

University: UCLA

Hobbies and/or other interests: history, strategy games, technology in general



What inspired you to become an engineer?

When I was very young, I attended a summer science camp which sparked my interest in engineering. Over the years, I got involved with more STEM classes and extracurriculars, such as physics and robotics. I became more interested in these subjects as I spent more time doing them. I wanted to do something more tangible than pure physics, so I applied for the engineering program that was a part of my high school. Since then, I interned in two engineering labs at UCSB which proved to me that engineering is what I want to do. In the first lab, I worked on a system of 10 converging cameras tracking reflective dots to create a control system for various robots. The second project consisted of building a system for testing and gathering data for a submerged braking system. My proudest academic accomplishment has been teaching myself how facial recognition works. It was the first thing I learned that I felt had a practical application, and it required a deep understanding to get it to work the way I wanted it to.

Why did you choose UCLA?

I had the opportunity to visit UCLA's campus during my junior year of High School, and I really liked the campus. Also, the people I knew who attended UCLA spoke highly of the school. UCLA seemed to be the option which did not compromise prestige, opportunity, location, non-over-competitiveness, or cost.

How has your time at UCLA been?

I have really enjoyed my first year at UCLA. I got to meet a lot of cool people, and I joined IEEE Aircropter as well as Bruin Racing SMV, two engineering oriented clubs that gave me a chance to pursue my interests. My favorite classes so far have been Physics 1BH and CS32 because both classes pushed the boundaries of my understanding in areas that I am really interested in and I haven't taken an EE class to challenge them. My first year at UCLA was unfortunately cut short due to the outbreak of COVID-19, but I will still look back on it fondly.



What are you looking forward to?

I am looking towards taking more advanced engineering courses and gaining a better understanding of electrical engineering. Up to this point, most of the classes have laid an important foundation and I would like to start building off from here. Also, I would like to explore leadership in club roles and potentially doing research in a lab at UCLA.

How would you like to spend time after UCLA?

I am interested in deep space exploration and habitation. It seems like this is the direction humanity is heading, and I believe that I can contribute to it. Furthermore, technologies developed for the space industry have a habit of trickling down into our everyday lives, and research done on the sustainability of life in space can be applied to improve sustainability on Earth. I don't really know exactly what path I want to go down, but helping out here seems like a good option that I want to explore.

What's the coolest thing you've ever learned?

One time, for a project I was self-teaching myself some applications of Linear Algebra. My topic involved learning how facial recognition algorithms used Linear Algebra in order to distinguish people's faces. It was the first time that I found a practical use of a math concept that involved multiple nuances and required very deep understanding of the topic in order to use it practically.