

March 2020 - UCLA Fast Track Program

Where are you from?

I am from the Bay Area in California. I attended Bellarmine College Preparatory in San Jose.

What do you do in your free time?

Especially in high school I was into skiing, and it was the biggest activity I did outside of school. I also enjoy playing piano and I was in choir. Oh and I also like playing video games (Minecraft and League of Legends) and watching TV (Avatar the Last Airbender) in my free time.

Growing up, what inspired you to choose EE?

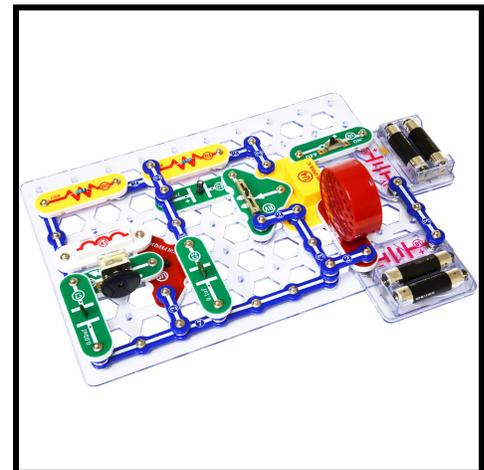
I guess in high school I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do, and I took physics and ended up really liking it. And I always enjoyed math. But I didn't want to do pure math or pure physics, and engineering was an application of both of them. Specifically electrical engineering because I've always enjoyed messing around with electronics. I had snap circuits when I was really young, and the E&M portion of the physics curriculum was more interesting than mechanics. It also fits in pretty well with software, and I like software. I am considering switching to computer engineering because of the software focus. But I also like hardware.

Why did you choose UCLA?

A big part of it was the fast track program. It just seemed like a very good program. And I also liked the UCLA location. Just being in LA meant a lot of opportunities that I wouldn't necessarily get elsewhere. I wouldn't have to wait till I graduate to start looking for them.

What are your favorite things to do at UCLA?

Hang out with the boys^[1]. I like going to the beach and taking trips around LA. Actually at UCLA I like how BFit and Wooden are pretty close and I take runs around campus. I didn't run as much as I liked, but it was fun. I enjoyed getting burritos from Rende, which made up like 60% of my meals at UCLA, and getting Boba - the dining halls at UCLA are definitely good.



What did you do to stay in touch with your friends during quarantine?

I had zoom calls with my friends on the weekends where we play video games (JackBox) together and I also communicate through Discord and texting. Online communication is definitely crucial to maintaining contact with my friends.

Which clubs are you involved with?

I joined Bruin HyperLoop but that is on hold because of Covid-19, but that was the main engineering club I did last year. I also occasionally went to the music club to play guitar, and that was fun. It's a small little club that meets every once in a while. I guess I didn't do too many clubs last year.

How has it been at UCLA so far?

I really liked UCLA so far. I like the environment. It doesn't feel like a ton of pressure. It doesn't feel like its super light or laid back either though. Academics are rigorous. When I want to I can leave campus and I could go to the mall or the beach. There was a lot to do and if I was stressed I could take the bus to Sawtelle and get food or something.

**What was your experience with SURP?**

I ended up working with UCLA LEMUR lab on "FORAY", a project involving lighter than air vehicles with professor Ankur Mehta. One of the goals is to enter our blimps into an aerial soccer competition where the blimps play against each other to score goals. I am currently working on power consumption. I think its been very good. I'm still working with the lab and overall it has been pretty helpful for getting experience with research as well as learning about how research works. I came into it not sure if I would know enough, but I realized that a lot of the process was just learning as I went. It was a good opportunity and I think it is great the Fast Track helps us find these opportunities.

What is your favorite aspect of the Fast Track program?

It's not a direct aspect of the program, but a lot of my very good friends are also in Fast Track. That's definitely one of my favorite parts about the program - the people I met. The opportunity to get research as a freshman was really cool too. I think that's a great part of the program. Getting us real world experience this early. The pizza at the meetings is good too (even though it is occasionally late).

What about your career plans?

Two main things I am considering is going straight into industry or doing a five year masters at UCLA through the Exceptional Student Admissions Program. Industry would most likely be the tech industry, especially if I switch to computer engineering. Ideally it would involve developing hardware or software for computers.

[1] "The Boys" are a group of people attending UCLA (the majority of who are in Fast Track) that Ryan enjoys spending time with