

# Fast Track Student of the Month: Alex Baldauf

**Birthplace:** Torrance, California

**Schooling:** South Torrance High School, Torrance, CA

**Interests outside of School:** Hiking, Tennis, Running, Playing with my dogs.

**Siblings:** One Younger Brother (age 19)

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

I have always wanted to study in a STEM related field ever since my dad took me to a “Take Your Son To Work Day” for his job at Boeing when I was younger. I was extremely interested in math and science after that, which helped me focus my studies in high school to excel in those fields. I did not know I wanted to be an EE specifically until I sat down with my dad one day, who informed me to the best of his ability what kind of work each type of engineer does. EE sounded the most appealing to me, so I applied as an EE to UCLA.



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

My dad was the key person in my life who influenced me to pick EE by getting me into math and science in the first place. However, many of my high school teachers helped further fuel my desire to be an engineer. They were great teachers and were really enthusiastic about the subjects that they were teaching, which helped me become enthusiastic for engineering as well. EE is also a very practical field with a wide range of potential jobs you can take after graduating as well.



## **Why did you choose the UCLA EE program?**

The main reason I chose the UCLA program over programs like Berkeley is the fact that the Fast Track program was very good at enticing me to pick UCLA. I feel like the heads of the program truly care about our success which helps make big campuses like UCLA's feel a bit less intimidating.

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

It was definitely difficult for me to adjust to the sheer number of people and opportunities here on campus during my first year here. I felt overwhelmed by it all. However, I feel like I've finally gotten into a groove here and feel comfortable with my position as a student here on campus. I still go home on the weekends a lot to see my friends and family back home, but that's just one of the perks of living an hour away.

## **What are you interested in as a career?**

I have not given much thought as to what I am interested in for a career. I doubt I will stay in academia after graduate school but at the same time I am open to the idea of it. At the moment, I am leaning towards working in a field that deals with communications because that's what my summer research was about. However, I might just as easily change my mind with another positive research/summer experience I go through in the following years.



## **How was your summer research experience?**

My summer research experience was very fun and rewarding as a whole. The professor I was working under had me and my partner learn various concepts from classes

we had not taken yet to assist in research, which was understandably very challenging. It was a good way to get ahead of our peers in our particular field of research, as well as pick up useful practical skills such as understanding how to practically use MATLAB for real world problems. It was a very good way to observe what kind of work graduate students do in labs, which gave me a pretty good impression as to what graduate school research would be like for me once I enter graduate school.