Jerry Ding

## Fast Track Student of the Month

Interviewed by Josiah Chang

1. Tell us a little about your background. What was your life like before UCLA (birthplace, interests inside outside school, siblings, etc.)?

I've spent most of my life in South California. Growing up, my parents would take me to the Science Center a lot, and I absolutely loved spending time there, going through whatever demos they had in the exhibit at the time. In middle school, I was part of the VEX robotics team where we learned block coding and how to design and construct our own machines. In sophomore year of high school, I was a part of the Science Olympiad team and was part of the Towers, Wind Power, and Fermi Questions events. While I quite enjoyed those, they weren't too relevant to what I wanted to do in the future. So around junior year, noticing there were very little STEM-related clubs on my campus, I started an electronics club. We put together some radio kits and a drone kit, mostly soldering practice and basic electronics. Near the end we did some fun stuff with Arduino. Although I didn't know much starting out, I was interested and learned quite a lot as I went along.
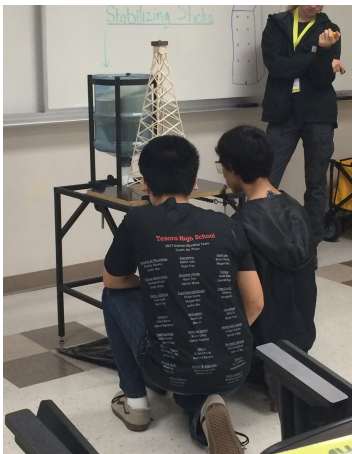
Outside of school, I've been interested in mountain biking since middle school. I'm a huge fan of the outdoors in general; I like hiking and going to national parks and canyons. Because of this, part of me wants to contribute to the conservationist cause in some way. I really hope to go on a proper camping trip one day.

2. When did you know you wanted to be an ECE and why?

It was more of a gradual process than any sort of realization. Looking around, I found almost everything essential now relies on electrical engineering in some way, such as phones, microwaves, and even cars. I had some decent fun in the electronics club like putting together the kits and messing around with the Arduinos. AP Comp Sci also hooked me on CS. Combined with my interest in electronics, I thought either electrical or computer engineering would be the best marriage of those two worlds and give me a lot of flexibility in the long run.

3. How has UCLA been so far? What are some of your most interesting experiences here?

The two fortunate quarters I've had in person at UCLA so far (ahem) were awesome. I checked out a great variety of clubs, such as Bruin Films Society and Game Music Orchestra in addition to stalwarts Bruin Racing and IEEE. The E96c with professor Kaiser was a good technical introduction as it combined machine learning with the sensors on your phone. Aside from academics, the food was obviously a highlight, and I'm really missing that at home right now (DeNeve has some pretty innovative burgers!). Other highlights include going to Santa Monica pier with my friends and staying up until 2 am playing cards (during Zero Week obviously). Currently, I think professors have adapted fairly well to online learning. Most of them are making accommodations to make things a little easier.

2019 Bruin Racing SuperMileage Vehicle (Bottom center)

4. What are you interested in as a career (whether you have a specific field already in mind or simply interested to look into)?

In terms of career, I'm not sure yet, but I'm currently in the Fast Track internship in Professor Subramanian Iyer's CHIPS lab. My job is to help write the design rule check for their silicon interconnect fabric, which is essentially a smaller scale version of PCB traces suited for nanometer scale designs. Although it is interesting, I'm not sure if working with small scale silicon traces is my dream field. I'm currently taking ECE 102 System and Signals, which also seems quite interesting (go Professor Kao!), so I'm also looking at systems and signals or power electronics. I'm also quite interested in computer science and plan to take as many CS classes as I can, or even switch to CE. I'll need to take more classes to decide what I really want to do. My eventual hope is that I'll find a way to apply it to conserving the environment, as that is one of the world's most pressing problems and engineering is certainly part of the solution.