Student of the Month: Maguire Papay

The Basics:

Birthplace: Orlando, Florida

High School: Thomas Jefferson High School of Science and Technology in Alexandria, Virginia

Interests: Rocketry (model rocketry, competition rocketry), cooking/baking

Siblings: Older sister

How/when did you know you wanted to do ECE:

I've known that I wanted to do engineering for a long time, but it was only until recently that I was able to choose a specific field to focus on. I used to think I wanted to do quantum computing, but when I took my first analog class senior year of high school, I became really passionate about electronics. And with ECE in particular, I knew I would be able to work in the field I wanted to. For example, I would love to work on rockets, and electronics are a very important subset of rocket design.
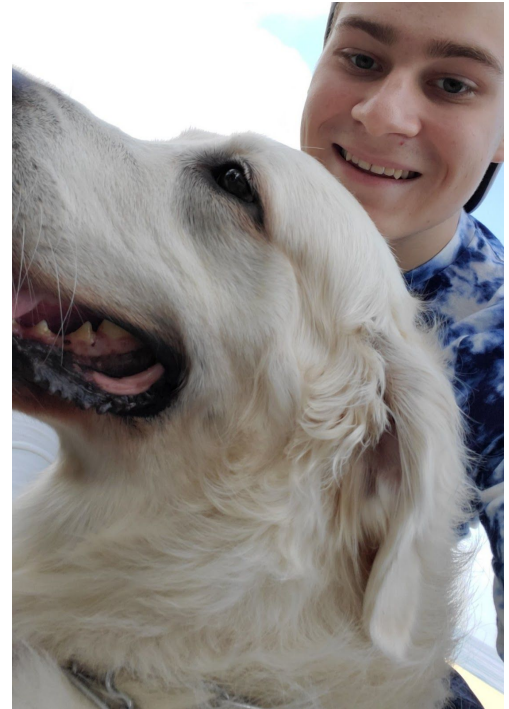
Who has influenced you the most in terms of academics:

Both my parents are STEM focused: my dad is an aerospace engineer, and my mom is a chemist. As a result, I did a lot of small engineering projects as a kid. In high school, I got into STEM and math through the amazing faculty. For example, Mr. Osbourne and Mr. Belle in my analongs class were the highlights of high school. They were both always willing to answer questions in class, and outside of class they were always in their classrooms, ready to help or give intuitive explanations to take you beyond the course material.

Why did you choose UCLA ECE:

Personally, I wanted to get off the east coast and experience something new, so I was mainly looking at schools on the West Coast. Academically, I was looking to continue challenging myself after high school, so the academic rigor of UCLA was definitely appealing to me. And, the Fast Track Program at UCLA was an added bonus. Outside of the classroom, UCLA has lots of opportunities that were very appealing to me. Most notably, UCLA has a very strong rocketry team which was a huge plus since I am very interested in getting involved in rocketry.

How has your experience at UCLA (a big campus) been so far:

My experience has been good so far; I've found a social circle through my fraternity Delta Sigma Pi. We explore the city a lot, and it's a lot of fun. Academically, I'm taking mostly GEs this quarter, so classes are a little boring. I'm adjusting to the workload and finding projects to work on. Currently I'm on the propulsion team of Rocket Project. I was involved in rocketry in high school, and already knew I wanted to join Rocket Project before coming to UCLA. Overall, it's been a smooth transition; I'm a relatively social person, so I'm not afraid to raise my hand in large lectures or go to office hours for personal attention. I love how you can just go talk to professors after class. The other day I walked up to a professor after an interesting lecture about a series of plane crashes, and we ended up talking for an hour over coffee.

Career interests:

I've always been interested in space, so I would love to work on projects that are related to space in any way, shape or form: whether it's through rockets or satellites. My high school had a CubeSat program, so I've built a CubeSat before. This was very interesting to me, and from this experience I know that I would definitely enjoy working in the space industry. If that doesn't work out, the energy sector right now is a good field to get involved in. I am considering doing my technical breadth in materials science because I love chemistry. And the energy sector has lots of opportunities with new materials, meaning I could combine electrical engineering and materials science. In particular, renewable energy is important right now because we need someone to do something about climate change soon. On a different note, I have also thought about quantum computing potentially for a PhD. Or, I could be a math professor since I really like math (and if not a math professor, being an electrical engineering or physics professor would be interesting).