

My experience this quarter has been paradoxically both expected and unexpected. On the one hand, my extensive planning and preparation during the summer paid off in terms of knowing what lay ahead, and my quarter went as smoothly as I think it could have; on the other hand, there was still an element of surprise and freshness that permeated my quarter.

The biggest paradigm shift for me this quarter was working with the steady stream of deadlines from my coursework. When talking about college life, most people I heard from prior to the start of autumn quarter had emphasized how much control one suddenly has over one's time, how much more long-term the deadlines are, how much free time one has to allocate. For me, the change has been very different. In my homeschool environment, I had a lot more discretionary time already, and deadlines that weren't self-imposed were fairly abnormal; I was used to setting my own schedule and planning my studies on my own. I now have weekly assignments and (for my accelerated calculus sequence) daily readings, and the syllabus marches on at its own pace. Before the quarter started, I knew that a shift in my lifestyle was going to happen, and yet I couldn't entirely predict what it would feel like.

Despite the fact that my weekly rhythm is quite different from what I'm accustomed to, I've been pleased by the extent to which I'm capable of regularly managing my deadlines and getting things done when they need to be done. It's very validating that the self-regulated nature of my homeschool years is translating well into the college environment.

There have been other differences, though, that aren't as pronounced. For instance, I haven't carried a backpack regularly before. Instead of walking over to the relevant cabinet or shelf whenever I need something, I instead pack everything I need for the day into a space no bigger than two cubic feet. When on the move, I need to know how far my backpack extends behind me, just as a tennis player knows how long the racket extends beyond the player's fingers. It was a new experience at first but now it almost feels normal.

One other surprise for me this quarter is that the UW community is smaller than I expected it to be. There's a remarkable potential for finding close-knit communities at UW; for me, I find that community through being a part of the Honors program and the CSE department. There have even been a handful of times this quarter where I've run into friends from CSE or Honors just while walking across campus.

I liked how HONORS 100 made a special effort to foster that sense of community while helping its participants set out a roadmap for themselves for the future. I liked being able to consolidate my research about course requirements into a four-year plan; I know this is only the beginning of the planning process and I'll continue to refine the plan as my circumstances evolve. I have a great Peer Educator who also happens to be in my department, and a lot of interesting classmates in a variety of fields; I'm looking forward to staying in touch with the people I've met. In talking to my partner for the experiential learning assignment, I got more acquainted with the ACM leadership roles and I now have that possibility on my radar more so than before.

Over the course of the quarter, my experiences meeting people and learning new things have enhanced my future planning and helped me get a good grasp on my long-term goals. I remain committed to CSE and the Honors program; I want to try CSE research and take a statistics class even more than at the beginning of the school year; I look forward to having

more of the kinds of interdisciplinary conversations I've had this quarter. Additionally, a few other things I hope to achieve by the end of my first year:

- Line up an interesting work opportunity for next summer
- Take a computer security seminar I'm interested in
- Build my LinkedIn network

I'm also compiling a list of programming languages and frameworks I'd like to learn just for fun. New on the list this quarter are Clojure, Node.js, and Django.

Autumn quarter has brought its own set of challenges, and I know the next quarter will bring more. With such a positive experience during my first quarter at UW, though, I feel ready to dive into my next quarter with confidence. This quarter I was not simply living out some predetermined path, taking inevitable steps along a well-traveled road; I was creating my future as I went. I like that feeling and intend to continue actively shaping my path during the rest of my university experience. With dedication, enthusiasm, and a few cups of chai tea, I can make the most of all that UW has to offer.