

## **Final Reflections on My Summer 2022 Enrichment Experience at the University of Chicago**

*By Robert Wigfall IV*

I have recently completed a three week long Immersion program at the University of Chicago, taking a Biotechnology course. As my experience at UChicago has come to an end, there are several details that are well worth sharing. I had a phenomenal time in Chicago, and I am forever grateful for the chance to attend this event that will prove so revolutionary to the course of my academic live, provided by the GFF. At this program, I was able to connect with a large variety of like-minded individuals (some from other countries), explore the great city of Chicago, deepen my knowledge regarding biotechnology, and most importantly, discover more of who I truly am. Living by myself, surrounded by people who I'd never seen in my life, and being forced to deal with the challenging and unwavering obstacles that come with college life, assisted me in learning a great deal about myself: a product of this trip that I wouldn't trade for the world. In this letter, I simply hope to convey the greatest highlights of my trip to UChicago and all the benefits that have come as a result.

Throughout my time at UChicago, the environment of campus truly assisted me in finding comfort. Over vast lengths of the UChicago campus, there were beautiful instances of architecture, ranging from old, more colonial buildings that many compare to the aesthetic of Hogwarts, to the more advanced, modern, and sleek buildings that housed the resources that make this university world-renown. I truly enjoyed traversing the vast UChicago campus, whether it be my walk to and from class, the dining hall, gym, or just perusing the opportunities that college life actuates.

An additional aspect of my UChicago journey, that I miss incredibly, is the food. When I first entered my dining hall, I was in awe at the surplus of options available for consumption. The dining hall encompassed a vast variety of foods, ranging from American classics such as hamburgers, pizza, and hotdogs, to foods found

internationally, and many more. Though it may sound like a trivial or insignificant detail in the perspective of my entire experience, having a reliable and delectable meal grants comfort, especially when immersed in a completely new environment.

As the main reason I attended this program, the biotechnology course I took truly helped solidify this experience. Throughout my time at UChicago, I became more familiar in a professional scientific lab, surrounded by advanced and cutting-edge technology working with complex processes, such as PCR, CRISPR, DNA sequencing, and fermentation. I learned how to use equipment I'd never seen or heard of before, however were instrumental in the discovery of the knowledge I'd learned in my freshman biology course. I dove deeper into the world of biology and was challenged by the ranging age of my peers. I feel incredibly grateful to have met my instructors who have provided me with the knowledge to build and grow throughout this course. Through guest lectures, extracurricular activities, and general interaction with people, I believe I have grown throughout this course and have the resources to continue to do so.

An additional component of my experience at UChicago was living on my own, something that I believe led to me learning a lot about myself. My initial perception regarding living by myself was daunting, as I thought I would constantly be homesick and would crave the comfort of the life I've lived up to that point. Strangely enough, however, I had an amazing time living by myself, temporarily emancipated from my nuclear family. Not to say that I don't enjoy their company, however, living by yourself, without the pre-established comfort and hospitality, normally available at home, while being forced to respond to a broad spectrum of situations, allows you a window to see who you truly are.

Being stripped of the conveniences and support I have at home forcibly inserted me into situations that I had to solve. I was forced to manage my own time, balance work and play, make time for simple human necessities, and ensure I was making the most out of this once in a lifetime experience. I believe that my responses to the ups and downs that

made this experience so unique allowed me to appreciate and find pride in my decision making. And even though the stress and pressures are increased when you are the sole proprietor of your destiny, the subsequent satisfaction when things go according to plan is extremely rewarding.

As you can see, I had a fantastic time at UChicago and would trade this experience and the self-growth that came as a result for nothing. I am so incredibly grateful for all the GFF has done to allow me to visit UChicago's amazing campus and learn from its fantastic instructors. This experience is one I will never forget, as there are a plethora of details and knowledge that I absorbed throughout my time. I truly believe that this program revealed more of who I am to myself, knowledge irreplaceable in value as I continue to define my path in life.