

Final Reflection on My 2023 Summer Enrichment Experience at the University of Chicago Summer Immersion Program

by Ryan Dai

Over the past three weeks, I have studied Pathways in Economics at the University of Chicago's Summer Immersion program. Being my first summer program, I was a bit nervous and had some doubts going into the program. However, after arriving, those doubts were put to rest and I quickly became acquainted with life at UChicago. During the 3-week program, I was able to explore many facets of economics, centered around the Chicago School of Economics. Outside the classroom, I met others who shared my love for economics, as well as some who specialized in other subjects. In addition, I was able to have a taste of what life is like at UChicago, including workload, dorm life, food, and weekend activities. From my experiences at UChicago, I now have an understanding of what I would like to do in the future, as well as more motivation and direction on how to achieve it.

Going into the course, I had never thoroughly learned about economics, only covering some interesting applications of the field. However, the course was able to provide me with a general overview of economics that gave me a better grasp of what economists do. Most importantly, the course taught me how economists think. Instead of focusing on money, we discussed how economists think about topics such as crime, marriage, and sports. Learning the economic method solidified my desire to pursue economics because it is a very interesting way of viewing the world. After learning about how economists think, we then learned some micro, macro, and applications. Before taking the course, I enjoyed micro more than macro, but only because I wanted to focus on individuals and not governments. Taking the course has confirmed my preference for micro, although I now enjoy it because the economic methods are more woven into it. In addition, from the applications we discussed, microeconomics can be successfully applied to anything from art to businesses. Instead of having a vague idea of my interests like I had to go into the course, the program left me with a concrete love of economics and a better understanding of why I enjoy it.

Other than the exploration opportunities the program provided, it also introduced me to many other students who are passionate about economics and other fields. From the first day, it was very apparent that everyone at the camp was knowledgeable about what they were studying. During the camp, I was able to have many enjoyable conversations and discussions about economics that I never could have had otherwise. In addition, I was able to learn about my friends' unique experiences which widened my worldview. Each of my friends came from different backgrounds, attended different schools, lived in different cities, and had different hobbies. From their experiences, I was able to learn more about how CCHS is different from other high schools, how it is

better, and what it is lacking. For example, before attending the program, I thought taking AP courses was standard for honors students, but I quickly learned that many of the elite high schools do not offer AP courses. In addition, I learned about IB tests and various programs for international students. Also, I learned about different ways the students pursued their interests. For example, in our economics class, some took economics classes, some wrote papers, and others participated in competitions. Outside of learning about my friends' experiences, it was refreshing to spend time with a group of students who share my interests.

At the program, I gained valuable experiences from living by myself, as well as a preview of college life and life at UChicago. One of the first things I adjusted to was dorm life. Before going to the program, I never researched how the dorms would be, so I did not know what to expect going in. The first couple of days the room felt weird, but after I had tasks to think about, I became used to the room. The aspect of life I took the longest to adjust to was how to spend my free time. In Chicago, there are plenty of activities to do, but traveling to the downtown area was not the most convenient. Most days, I would have about 3 hours of free time after class, but traveling to and from the city would take about 2 hours since my main mode of transportation was walking and the metro. Almost every day, my friends and I decided two hours of transportation outweighed the one hour of activities. On days when we had a little extra free time, we decided to play some basketball together. On the weekends, we chose to participate in the program-organized activity on Saturday and study on Sunday. Most notably, we attended a White Sox game. For studying on Sundays, we chose one of the libraries on campus to study in. As for the UChicago campus, I enjoyed their blend of greenery and brick, old and new. Previously, I have visited their campus, but I never had the opportunity to explore the buildings thoroughly. The program gave me the chance to explore some of the buildings on campus. My classes were mostly held in Harper Memorial Library, so I was able to spend time in its reading room and lecture halls. Additionally, we had one lecture in Saieh Hall and a couple in Cobb Hall, the economics and chemistry buildings respectively. Although I spent little time in the buildings, my experience there gave me a taste of what else the campus had to offer.

Along with valuable experiences in campus life and networking, the program taught me foundational economic concepts that I can apply daily. Importantly, the program has given me a better understanding of what I want to do in the future. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to attend a program that has altered my worldview while creating fond memories of the people I met. The bonds I built during the program taught me about how others live around the world and learn from their experiences. Within the diverse group of students, I met students with a variety of interests. In the end, the lasting bonds built and lessons learned will be engraved in my memory.