

Final Reflection on My 2025 Summer Enrichment Experience at Summer at Brown University.

By Ryan Dai

Going into my program, I knew nothing about Brown, Providence, and Rhode Island. In three weeks, I have had the great opportunity to explore the three while learning more about a topic that interests me. Outside of the classroom, I had many chances to explore the surrounding area, participate in trips, and meet new people. In the classroom, I was exposed to a new level of understanding of the world. All in all, my three weeks at Brown have been incredibly rewarding to me both academically and personally.

During the program, I had lots of opportunities to explore both Rhode Island and Massachusetts. My class was from 3:30-6:20 pm Monday through Friday, so I had plenty of free time on my hands. In the first week, I strayed from going about during my free time as I adjusted to the new schedule and routine. During that week, I chose to limit myself to only going to the gym in the morning. Brown's gym is located in an old building, which gives the gym a unique feel. Similarly, their pool is also located in that building. Being a D1 school, the pool was very nice, and I enjoyed swimming in it. Unfortunately, the pool was closed the final week, so I was not able to do that week. However, in the later weeks, I ventured out during that time, learning more about the city of Providence. I am mostly used to driving everywhere, but Brown's location allowed me to walk everywhere. I took advantage of the fact that it was a twenty-minute walk to the ocean and downtown Providence to explore the city. During the last two weeks, I spent many mornings walking along Providence's riverwalk and taking in the natural beauty of the city. Although there are a few small skyscrapers, the city is very peaceful during the workday. The streets are well-kept, but it feels like you are the only one in the city. On weekends, the program

organized many off-campus activities. I decided to participate in the Topgolf trip on the first weekend and the aquarium and MLS game trips during the second week. In the first week, the Topgolf trip was a brand-new experience for me. For one, I have never been to a Topgolf before, and going for the first time was incredibly fun. The trip was also the first time I saw the city of Providence. From the interstate, all I could see was a couple of buildings and factories. However, it reminded me to go out and explore the city, which I did. My weekend was much busier the second week, as I signed up for two trips on one day. In the morning, I went to Boston, where we enjoyed the aquarium and Fanuiel Hall. The aquarium was smaller than I expected, as it was just one large tank. However, our time at Fanuiel Hall gave me a chance to explore a historic part of Boston, which I liked. The trip helped me realize how convenient attending Brown is. The school is away from the bustle of Boston, but it is still easy to take a trip there. That night, I went to Gillette Stadium to watch an MLS game. I am not the largest soccer fan, but I was interested in going to an NFL stadium. The stadium is located about halfway between Boston and Providence, and it confirmed my earlier realization. Overall, I loved the city of Providence and its surroundings.

My experience in the classroom was equally rewarding. Last year, the UChicago program gave me a new way of looking at the world. This year, I have added to that worldview. Instead of looking only at the direct motivation or effect of a decision, I have learned to think about other variables that could be important. For example, deciding whether or not to recycle is a personal decision. To one person, the time it costs to recycle might outweigh their personal benefit. However, the total benefit per person of everyone recycles is much greater than the personal benefit of one person recycling. In this case, the government must step in and incentivize recycling. In addition, we discussed other applications of economics, outside of what I learned

last year. Instead of just considering politics in economic decisions, we learned about how economic decision-making affects political decisions, such as whether or not to be corrupt and who to vote for, which was equally interesting. By thinking about the set of incentives that a group faces, you can predict their decisions and come up with ways to change those incentives to motivate them to act more favorably. To do this, we looked at different case studies from around the world. Most of the case studies were in the form of scholarly research. Reading the papers taught me how to read research. Initially, I tried to read the papers cover to cover, but I quickly found that that was not a good idea. Instead, I learned to read the abstract and conclusion first, then jump around looking for relevant information. Our daily homework included readings and creating a discussion post about the readings. Using my new method, I was able to process the readings more efficiently. The structure of the class was a bit odd in the fact that the readings we did were almost exactly what we learned in class. As a result, because I processed the readings, I also learned, excluding any questions I had, what the teacher was teaching in the next session, which made class a little drier. For our final project, we were tasked with creating a presentation about a specific political economy topic. My group was assigned the topic of growth and development. Each group was supposed to choose a case study to analyze, and my group chose China. Within our presentation, I researched how the Chinese government created growth and compared its economic policy throughout time. I also examined their political system and how that promoted growth.

My experience at Brown has taught me a lot about what I want to do in the future and where I want to do it. Brown and Providence are absolutely wonderful, and I would love to learn there. That said, I would guess winters there are not as enjoyable. I knew coming into the program that

I wanted to study economics, but I did not know what subfield I was interested in. I now know that I would like to study developmental economics. Development economics is a little bit of all of the subfields and is very application-based. Further, the nature of development economics would allow me to help others, as good policies can raise millions out of poverty. Beyond poverty, developmental economics helps set up institutions that function without corruption, helping nations run smoothly.

Over the past two years, I have been granted the opportunity and have over the past two years to explore a topic that I am passionate about at institutions that are elite in those subjects. My time at both programs has not only confirmed my passion for the field but has also opened my mind to new places and exposed me to kids of different backgrounds. For that, I am incredibly grateful.