

## **University of Chicago Scholars Participant Comments Fall 2021 & 2019**

### **Grace Liu '23 – Biology at Caltech and Biological Sciences at UChicago**

When I first looked at study abroad opportunities, I was looking for two things – a vibrant, bustling city environment and a student body with diverse intellectual interests, beyond the STEM majors that are found at Caltech. For me, UChicago was the perfect blend of the familiar (with its academic rigor, theoretical coursework, and research-focus) and the novel (with its larger student body, a city I had never explored before, and great diversity in academic and extracurricular interests).

Though I thoroughly enjoy my biology major classes at Caltech, I have always wanted to surround myself with more humanities majors, who might help me gain a more well-rounded knowledge base. At Caltech, it seemed like everything ended up coming back to STEM – the economics class was calculus-based, the psychology class talked more about neurobiology than the famous psychological hypotheses and even one of my English classes focused on Newton's Principia text. I was looking to be engaged and forced to think in new ways by people who were very different from me, and who fundamentally saw the world in a different light than me.

One of the most unique academic opportunities, that I could only get at UChicago, was taking a class at the Booth school of Business. UChicago has a number of professional schools that offer specialized and application-based classes in humanities fields, such as business and public policy. In my class, I was surrounded by business and economics major and for the first time in a while, I was one of the only STEM majors in the classroom. This difference could be seen in the way that the UChicago professor taught – he didn't expect us to derive the complex equations used. Instead, he brought up current and historical examples of stock markets: the 2008 crash, the high volatilities of COVID. Never did I have to ask myself "how does this relate to the real world", because it was so obvious how the things we were learning were tied to the world around us, and it felt like everything I wanted and more.

Another memorable moment for me was when I first stepped on the quad during the club fair. I marveled at the diversity of clubs that were represented, which included a club for every academic discipline, every sport/martial art I had heard of, and 5-6 options for a literary magazine, which is what I had been looking for. It was beyond refreshing to see so many people who had the same interests as me, and to see so many opportunities for me to pick up a new interest.

Finally, one of the things that was the most important to me when choosing UChicago was the city. Although I have only spent a limited amount of time here, I can already feel that Chicago has a fundamentally different 'feel' to it than Pasadena, or Los Angeles. There are so many museums that are available for free, including the Museum of Science and Industry, which is only a few minutes away, and the Art Institute of Chicago. I also loved that each neighborhood of Chicago that I visited – Hyde Park, the Loop, Chinatown, Fulton Market – all had a wildly different feel to them. There is always something new to be found when you go to a new area of Chicago, and it's always amazing to go to new areas with friends and just take it all in.

I always felt that college is the one time in my life to expand my horizons and experience new things and do everything that I dreamed of doing, and my time at UChicago has felt exactly like that – a dream that had enriched my perspective in so many different ways.

## **University of Chicago Scholars Participant Comments Fall 2019**

### **Karen Pham '20 – Geology at Caltech and Geophysical Sciences at UChicago**

I left my first sociology class at UChicago realizing just how starved for different experiences I had been throughout the previous 3 years I had spent at Caltech.

At UChicago, be prepared to feel out of your element – to go through introductions around the room and realize that you are the only STEM major in a sea of students studying public policy, politics, and comparative race and ethnic studies. Be prepared to meet the zaniest, the most incredible, the most passionate people you've ever met and find yourself unlocking a yearning for the humanities and social sciences that you might have forgotten while at Caltech. Be prepared to be shocked at the Club Fair at UChicago, where it'll take you over an hour just to walk past all the different tables that encompass just about any interest you could possibly have – slam poetry, radio DJing, weightlifting, bird watching – literally any interest you could have. It's way too easy to get sucked into the "Caltech bubble," but once you escape, don't look back. Come to Chicago for the museums (I recommend the Art Institute and the Field Museum, both of which are one of many museums that are free with your UChicago student ID!), to gain a more global perspective of the world around you daily talks and student clubs without having to go through the hassle of obtaining a visa to travel somewhere else, and to be able to say that you were able to have the unique experience of attending multiple universities in the U.S. without transferring. Come for the fall quarter (yes, the academic dates line up perfectly with those at Caltech) and leave before the weather gets too gnarly. While you're here, expect to gain a broader appreciation for the world outside of Caltech and a greater familiarity with public transit than Pasadena can give you.

The campus climate at UChicago is just enough to make you feel like home – the quarter system, the academic rigor and more theoretical focus in classes, and even the existence of a housing system (though quite different from Caltech's) – but at the same time so wildly different that every day feels fresh and new. In the process of being here and drawing parallels between UChicago and Caltech, you'll find out what makes Caltech so unique and have the perspective of having attended another university to prove it. If you're anything like me, you'll be torn between yearning for more of the humanist perspective you gain here through contact with brilliant non-STEM students and feeling so incredibly grateful for the opportunities you have had available to you at Caltech. You won't know whether you want to stay here forever or go home.

Finally, to those worried about safety, don't worry; I was at first too. Although I wouldn't advise going out at night, there are UChicago police officers on-duty stationed all over campus, and there are daytime and nighttime shuttles that run on the campus and in surrounding areas. UChicago also provides all of its undergraduate students with a transit card that will allow you to ride Chicago public transit for free. So far, I have had no issues with getting around the city during the day or around the school at night.

Come to Chicago for the deep dish pizza and to learn more about a city brimming with architectural, cultural, and other histories. Perhaps like me, you'll leave knowing that your soul is infinitely richer and fuller than when you came in.