

A question I hear a lot from my parents, close family friends, and younger friends of mine from high school is “Aagney, how’s college going?”. Despite receiving this question so frequently though, I never seem to be able to articulate a straightforward answer. This quarter, I took five classes: CSE 351, MATH 126, HONORS 230B, CSE 391, and HONORS 100. Out of these classes, I think that CSE 351 and HONORS 100 have had the biggest impact on my expectations and goals at UW.

CSE 351 is a class about low-level programming concepts. This isn’t the most applicable class for the field of computer science that I’m pursuing, but the class and the students in it have taught me a lot about the work ethic needed to succeed at the UW and the Allen School more specifically. For example, I’m not used to studying unless there’s an upcoming test, but I learned a couple weeks too late that studying the material covered in class is the norm – even if the midterm is weeks away. Most 351 students are sophomores or juniors, so it was nice to be able to shadow the habits of successful students. I think this is what surprised me most about the UW; the standard for work ethic is, frankly, a lot higher than I’m used to. One resource whose value I learned from upperclassmen is the computer science building. The computer labs here are filled with study groups for students in the same class. Next quarter, I look forward to utilizing these facilities more often.

The assignments in HONORS 100 have helped me immensely with envisioning a future for my academic and career pathway. Going into this quarter, I was overwhelmed by the number of degree requirements there were. However, the four-year plan gave me a chance to visualize everything, and I discovered that I’ll have five quarters completely free to complete an additional major or a minor, study abroad, or just take interesting classes. Studying abroad is one opportunity I learned about in HONORS 100 that I’d like to explore further; there are a lot of exciting programs offered by the Honors department and computer science department that could enrich my studies with a global perspective. At this point in time, my hope is that by the end of my time in Honors, I will have a well-rounded computer science education. To me, this means that beyond my degree requirements, I will have engaged thoroughly in a global program, teaching assistant job, and/or meaningful and impactful research. I’m unsure whether I’ll pursue another major, but for now these are my goals.

I think these changes in ambitions and perspective reason that I’ve struggled to clearly explain my college experience. My vision for myself in the future seem to change with every new opportunity I read about, every interesting person I meet, and every obstacle I overcome. This very fact that has surprised me the most about myself: entering college, I was so sure that I had everything figured out. But now, my outlook is as volatile as ever. And as a result, I’m much more excited to take on the next four years with an interdisciplinary approach.

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