WEEK 1

I can only think of 2 people to thank. First is my father, Atul Kapur; a crazy entrepreneur, critical thinker, education enthusiast, soon to be hotelier, but most importantly a loving father. I thank him for teaching me how to look at the bigger picture in life. He taught me how to create and live in a world beyond grades and GPAs, a world of pure creation and passion, a world where I can be me without fear. And this is what made me understand but more importantly believe in Olin’s teaching ways. The other person whom I’d like to acknowledge is Karen Hyman, associate director of the Illinois Foundry of Innovation in Engineering Education (iFoundry) at University of Illinois. She was always alongside me giving me faith that I’m not insane to go on an exchange within USA and take courses which I know won’t transfer into my Computer Engineering curriculum. She made my Olin dream a reality and for that I thank her.

I’ve been asked “Why Olin?” or better yet “What is Olin?” from countless friends. Usually those are followed by “But your courses won’t transfer?”, or “Dude, you’re crazy!” Olin, to me, has understood what engineering truly is, but more so how it fits within society today. Olin’s mission statement says that Olin aims to create engineers who understand real world **societal** problems and can come up with workable solutions to solve them. More importantly, they do not let this mission get diminished by letting students get into a job or GPA conscious mentality. The Olin community is where its true strength lies. Olin has converted faculty to friends, and friends to teachers or as it is called “NINJAs”. Olin has created an atmosphere of trust and maturity though its honor code. Each student abides by it to as strong an extent that professors give them take home final exams and know that they won’t cheat.

Orientation was really nice, and well put together. I was clubbed with the foreign exchange students who were then clubbed with the freshman class of 2015. Day 1 was pretty much get settled in and meet roommates. Later during the day there was a friendly meeting with OSL (Office of student Life) staff, who stay with us in the dorms. The next couple of days consisted of team bonding activities and “getting to know each other” exercises. The orientation culminated with a scavenger hunt in Boston which was EPIC!

I got stuck with 2 needles when I got here. Being an international student, I am supposed to abide by some really long and irrelevant MA immunizations list. The $200 bill hurt more than the needles.

Soon enough upperclassmen flooded the dorms, which was exciting as the exchange students were mostly seniors and it was kind of stretch doing freshman orientation with freshman for like 5 days. Yesterday was the first day of classes. I’m taking HFID (Human Factors Interface Design), PDD (Product Design and Development), and Systems. I want to take one more, either ‘Intro to Material Science’ or ‘Intro to Microelectronics and Nanotechnology’. HFID was the highlight of this week. I am LOVING what that class teaches. It’s pretty much HCI (Human Computer Interaction) without any sort of backend computer science, so just the interfaces. For non-tech people, it’s teaches you to design software interfaces taking into account your user group. Systems was also pretty cool. It is being taught by two amazing guys who have a combined industrial experience of 75 years and one of them founded SolidWorks. They class is taught as if we’re all partners in the firm, divided into teams, all working towards a common goal. First task of the class: we were given a broken and old scanner, then asked to fix it, and write a report and scan that report to our professor using that scanner. The whole class is about understanding layers and complexities of a system and how you can work with such obstacles to come out with solutions.

Long weekend ahead, may go camping with some folks here. Not sure though. Also have homework.

Olin is shaping up to be probably the best time of my education so far.