



UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

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Dear Mr. Mark and Mrs. Hilda Pytosh,

I just learned that I'll be receiving the Mark Pytosh Fellowship for the 2016-2017 academic year and I wanted to thank you for your generosity in making this possible! In order to pursue my degree at Illinois, I've moved away from home, and this will allow me to visit my friends and family for the first time in over a year. I likely won't be able to convey my gratitude in a single letter but I'll try my best.

I grew up in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, which is a suburb about 45 minutes outside of Philadelphia by train or car. My grandpa got a degree in Chemical Engineering at Drexel University in Philly, and was my main inspiration for going to Drexel for my B.S. in Chemistry. While here, I had the opportunity to work for 6 months each at West Pharmaceutical Services and Janssen Pharmaceuticals (a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson) as a quality control and research & development co-op, respectively. During my time at school, however, I discovered that I really enjoyed the fundamental physics and math that underpins chemistry. This caused me to switch into the dual BS/MS program with a heavy focus on physics and computational method development in chemistry. During this time, I wrote my thesis on two methods I developed and this work was what led me to realize I loved the method development field of computational chemistry and was the reason I decided to pursue my PhD.

I chose to go to UIUC for my PhD because of the outstanding reputation it has, not only in chemistry, but also in computer science and physics, which are all intimately intertwined in my current research with Dr. So Hirata. I think I have a fantastic opportunity here to learn methods that are desirable in today's workforce as well as in fundamental chemistry method development. For example, the field of machine learning has exploded recently, and has the ability to significantly impact how we solve chemical problems, but also is nearly ubiquitous in data science in general. After I finish my program at Illinois, I plan on utilizing my experience in computational science to transition towards data science. Since I've always been generally curious about pretty much everything, I really think I'll enjoy being able to generalize my experiences in order to apply my knowledge in various fields. I haven't locked myself into one field in particular, but I have been strongly considering the financial sector. If I get the chance, however, I think it would be really fun to work in the video game industry for a few years!

Again I want to express my gratitude for receiving this fellowship, which is only possible because of you. It will go a long way in helping me both with my student loans and travel to see my family, which will to a great deal to help me get through the rigors of the PhD program here at UIUC. So thank you and I won't forget this generosity!

Sincerely,

Evan Curtin
2nd year PhD Student,
Department of Chemistry