

The decision to graduate in two years was practical: with my sister entering college, I felt a sense of responsibility to graduate early and ease my family's financial burden. Motivated to pursue my academic goals and make the most of my college experience, I conducted research as a freshman, started an algorithms club, and sought out mentors. This pressure taught me to identify opportunities and manage long-term time constraints. To graduate quickly while still pursuing my academic goals, I sought out community and mentorship through a research advisor and various clubs. It shaped me as a student and learner, and gave me the resourcefulness and commitment to maximize my time in graduate school. Going into undergrad, I wanted to develop a specific passion in computer science, and so I joined computer science clubs and research. It is now the desire to become an expert in my field that drives me to pursue a PhD.

Engaging in leadership as an undergrad helped me collaborate with people with diverse perspectives. I felt that undergraduate students were limited in the depth they could explore within algorithms, and so I started an algorithm club. By reaching out to students from various departments, I attracted people from academic backgrounds in mathematics, economics, computer science, and engineering disciplines to the club. As a result, newer students often helped guide interesting discussions in directions I did not expect. In one such meeting, a younger student's questions on minimum cuts led to a discussion on submodularity. When discussing fair division, economics students were able to provide perspectives on the differences between traditional economics and economics in computation. These moments taught me the value of diversity in finding different approaches to problems and asking new questions. In the Multimodal Interactions Lab, the same was true in collaboration.

Such discussions gave me different perspectives on my own work as well. Finding communities with different research interests and taking courses such as combinatorial optimization helped me understand the mathematical interest of fair division in other communities of theoretical computer science. Working with others taught me the value of studying specific problems in computer science. It gave me the motivation to pursue further research and made my work in fair division, and later combinatorial optimization, feel substantial. As a graduate student, I'm eager to continue working with people across subdisciplines within theoretical computer science, to mentor students encountering new research areas, and to help create inclusive problem-solving communities.