

General Education Reflection

General education classes helped me become a well-rounded person. Last semester I took CHIN 101: Elementary Mandarin Chinese I. I always wanted to learn Chinese since a lot of my friends are Chinese students at ISU but I didn't take it because if I were to take Chinese classes I wanted to master the subject. But taking Chinese just for fun for the last semester was a good choice I made. I come from Japan where people use Chinese characters. It's often interesting that we can communicate just by writing. I thought it would be more interesting if I could speak Chinese.

It's true I don't need to learn Chinese to have a successful career in the tech industry. But it's really beneficial to have a good understanding in a different language as well as the culture. Businesses are operating at a global scale; therefore, we need to deal with customers with diverse backgrounds. As a result, we, as engineers, also need to solve problems from various perspectives. Having understanding in a different culture will allow you to think from various different perspectives, which will bring a better solution and quite often innovations as well. From the career point of view, learning Chinese would open many doors for good jobs at Chinese speaking companies. Nowadays, a lot of Chinese companies are innovating computer industry. It would be interesting to work in one of those companies.

This semester I am taking MGMT 472: Management of Diversity. This is a discussion and team-oriented class and we discuss a lot of diversity issues such as cultural diversity/unity, equal employment opportunity/affirmative action, and gender or race discrimination in the workplace. The whole concept of this class is that diversity can bring about lots of positive effects to a business and I totally agree with this concept. A lot of changes regarding diversity have been brought into the various industries in this country in the past decades. Research shows that heterogeneous groups can contribute more creative ideas and give a business a competitive edge.

Last summer I was lucky enough to intern at PayPal, one of the most diverse companies in the US and included in the Best Employers for Diversity by Forbes. Diversity is important, but often underestimated is inclusion. PayPal considers inclusion very important. Working at PayPal, I felt very included. Here is what the CEO of PayPal wrote in the PayPal stories.

"Diversity is a fact, inclusion is a choice." That's one of my favorite quotes about diversity and is something I think perfectly encapsulates where we are as a society and the challenges facing all of us. Change is undeniable and unstoppable. But we do have control over how we embrace and enable change. We all get to make a choice. PayPal has made its choice.

Bringing diversity is naturally done in the tech industry because it is a very demanding field. But diversity without inclusion is going to be a stressful environment and eventually those good workers will quit. From economic perspective, both diversity and inclusion need to be considered equally important.

Engineering is just one side of solving real-life problems. Simply implementing a robust solution is not enough to make a successful project. Overall, general education classes introduced me into a different culture, gave me an idea about effective discussion skills, and I learned to think about engineering solutions from various perspectives.