PRIKSHET SHARMA: CAREER REFLECTION

I want to work at a space company as a computer scientist and/or an astronaut, or pursue a career in entrepreneurship. My third choice, which I would incline to if money and prestige were not a thing, is to become a full-time musician.

To work at a space company, I need a PhD and an extensive experience in flying planes. After getting ten thousand hours of flying experience, I will apply for Computer Scientist and/or astronaut positions at space organizations like SpaceX and NASA. After getting hired and possibly receiving extensive astronaut training, I might someday become a space traveler. This path requires a PhD after my undergrad, therefore I’m determined to conduct research over summer during my undergraduate career, so that I am better equipped to apply for PhD programs.

One research opportunity I am currently in the process of applying is Caltech’s SURF program. The SURF website has research opportunities posted along with the mentors’ emails. I have been trying to contact the different mentors, hoping that they will take me on board in their research. Apart from that, I’m also conducting research at our University currently with Professor Gonzalo Mateos in data mining and data visualization.

I am also interested in entrepreneurship, something I would dedicate my life to if I cannot make it as an astronaut. I regard entrepreneurship as a noble pursuit if the goal is not to make money but to make the world a better place, which is what I’m aiming for. I want to solve meaningful and significant problems related to the environmental crisis, the market crises and/or create products that help people live better lives. Solutions to these problems could manifest in companies that specialize in renewable energy, predict market crashes, or make self-driving cars using Artificial Intelligence.

I recently went to the Silicon Valley through our University and learned a lot about its startup culture. I’m interested in working at a startup over the summer to learn about the inner, so that I’m better equipped to make smarter decisions when I do my own startup. I have learned that working at a startup is very different from working at a bigger company; unlike in a bigger company, employees often have many distinct roles to play. This is because in the beginning stages of any company, the funds are always lacking, so they try to squeeze out the maximum output from limited resources, thus requiring a single employee to do a set of diverse tasks, sometimes across multiple disciplines.

The life of a full-time musician would guarantee me fulfilment but at the same time be a risky endeavor in terms of becoming a successful musician. I would start a band, do live gigs and simultaneously record and release albums. After getting some records sold, our band might be able to tour the world to perform in concerts across different continents. I’m VERY passionate about music and it has a very big role in my life. If I could do it full time, that would be great.