Summer Research in Waterloo -

A Journey to Understand Myself

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Last summer, I was glad to have a chance to do research under the supervision of Prof. Spiro Karigiannis at University of Waterloo (UW). Three other students, Nat Leung, Victor Fong and Danny Kwan, from our Department went with me. Nat and I were in the same group while Victor and Danny worked under two other professors.

This opportunity enabled me to experience many new things. We read a few tough research papers on special Lagrangian geometry. At times, I would spend the whole afternoon verifying a computation stated in the paper. At some other times, I might sit in the library for a whole day trying to digest three or four pages of a paper. To be frank, I often felt frustrated reading those papers as the mathematical problems are formidable. However, as time passed, it started to appear to me that this experience is actually positive and beneficial. I learnt how to cope with frustration. It also equipped me with patience and self-reflection for future challenges.

We visited some awesome places outside the campus. For example, I visited Toronto’s CN Tower, the Toronto Zoo, Royal Ontario Museum, and the Niagara Fall. I also met many students from all over Canada when I joined the Canadian Undergraduate Mathematics Conference in Ottawa. On the campus, when I wanted to relax a bit in the afternoon, I would go to the Columbia Lake, which is very close to the campus, to enjoy a walk around the lake. I could always find some squirrels climbing on the trees, running on the grass or some lovely goose swimming in a pool or a river.

There was one truly unexpected reward from this research project experience — it helped me understand myself much more deeply. During this summer, I started to ponder what I should do in the future. As I walked through UW’s campus every day, gazing at the beautiful natural environment around, and watching amazing clouds blending with sunshine in the sky, I was fascinated by the nature and came up with an idea: perhaps, I should try to do some applied mathematics related to our environment, such as climate change or weather forecast as my future career.

This great experience is impossible without several important people. Let me take this chance to thank Prof. Spiro Karigiannis, my advisor at the University of Waterloo. I would like to express my deep appreciation to Prof. Thomas Au, who told me about this summer research opportunity in the first place. I would also like to thank Prof. Conan Leung for writing a recommendation letter to Prof. Karigiannis for me, and last but not least, Prof. Ka Sing Lau, our Department Chairman, for arranging this research opportunity.