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MIT-CUHK Undergraduate Exchange Programme 2015

I am Pak-Hay Chan, a Year-3 student from Department of Computer Science in CUHK. In the last semester, I received MIT-CUHK Undergraduate Exchange Scholarship 2015 and got a precious opportunity to be an exchange student in Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), one of the best universities in the world and especially for its Computer Science department.

I still cannot forget on the first few days of arrival, there was a historic blizzard in Boston and the whole city almost stopped operating. The whole Charles River outside my dormitory turns white in one single night and when I walked on the street, I saw everything was covered by thick white snow. I was very lucky that I just arrived one day before the blizzard and had time to settle down. That was an unforgettable experience to me.



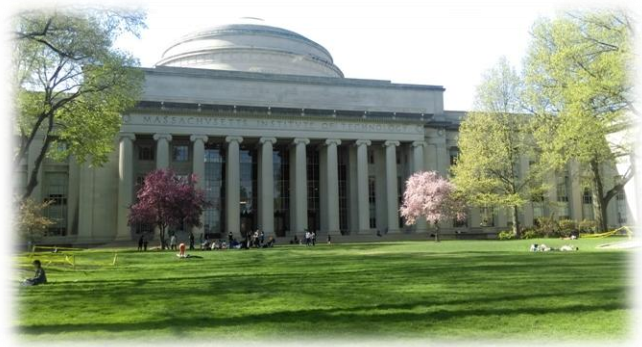
**Massachusetts Avenue under blizzard**



**Charles River under blizzard**



**Views from dormitory in Spring**



**MIT main building in Spring**

After the "warm" welcome from Boston, the semester started and I selected three classes which were Randomized Algorithms, Network Security and User Interface Design. One interesting thing to mention is that, students are allowed to select classes with conflicting schedule and there were no credit limit. I believed that brings huge flexibility to students and MIT really trust their students to handle things well. Among the three classes, I like Randomized Algorithm most and it is the best class I have ever taken. Besides doing a lot of foundation work in this field, Professor David Karger is also an excellent speaker. His lectures are funny, clear, interesting and perfectly-paced. Although those weekly problem sets were really tough, it aroused my interest and deepened my understanding to the material. Problems set are called P-set in MIT, and usually it is hard and there is no hope to finish it alone. So almost every class in MIT, students are strongly encouraged to form different P-set groups to tackle those hard problems. I like this culture very much. Through different P-set groups I met a lot of students around and I learned so much more by exchanging ideas with others.

I also joined UROP, which is short for Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program. I was in Zero Robotics team, which organizes annual programming competition for high school students. Students have to write program to control spheres in the space to do certain tasks. Our sub-team was designing tasks and programming the contest simulator for the coming year. This was something very new to me and I also enjoy working with new people.

Besides those academic classes and research program, I also had a lot of fun in MIT. MIT provides wide range of physical education class for students to take, I took ice skating, indoor climbing and slacklining classes, these classes are incredibly fun and I got relaxed from the pressure of those P-sets. I also met exchange students from China, India and Norway, they were nice and friendly and we had parties or went out to have fun in the weekends sometimes.



**Friends from India and Norway**



**Indoor climbing!**



**Friends from China in Walden Pond**

In all, this unforgettable journey really means a lot to me. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thankfulness to Tsinghua-MIT-CUHK Research Center for Theoretical Computer Science, Professor Charles K. Kao Research Exchange Scholarship and Department of Computer Science and Engineering for providing such a valuable opportunities and scholarship. It was a wonder experience to me and the scholarship really provides huge support to my living expense.