

LIU Litian
Department of Information Engineering
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Massachusetts Institute of Technology is located on the north shore of Charles River in Cambridge. When I first arrived at MIT, Charles River was all covered with ice and snow. And before I left, the foliage along Charles River had already grown green and lush in the mild summer of Cambridge. I am more than grateful to MIT-CUHK exchange program for the wonderful experience I had in the past six months. Also, I am more than grateful to the financial support provided by Professor Charles K. Kao Research Exchange Scholarship Fund, the Tsinghua-MIT-CUHK Research Center for Theoretical Computer Science and the department of Information Engineering. Your generous help provides huge support to my education and living expense during my stay in the United States.

Living in MIT is totally different from living in CUHK. On my arrival at MIT, I was amazed how the buildings in main campus are connected to each other. Back in CUHK, we have to go uphill and down dale or even take buses from class to class. But in MIT, you do not even need to walk into the chilly winter outdoors. The buildings, though connected, are in completely different style. There are traditional buildings like Memorial Lobby and modern but wired buildings like the famous Stata. When spring comes, I would rather walk outdoors than indoors. Trees are covered with bloom and small animals are around the campus. I began to jog along the Charles River every other day in late spring. And every sunset I saw is hauntingly beautiful and wonderfully heartbreaking.



Figure 1: A Squirrel in Campus

As for studying at MIT, it is both a challenging and a fruitful experience. I started with three courses: Introduction to Machine Learning, Design and Analysis of Algorithms, Discrete Stochastic Process. And I dropped Design and Analysis of Algorithms after a while due to multiple reasons. Compared with CUHK, the courses at MIT have much larger workload. The materials are harder to understand and the assignments take much more time than that in CUHK. But help and support are always available. Students are encouraged to form small study groups for solving the

problem sets. And the interaction between staff and student are active and efficient, thanks to traditional ways like office hours and internet platforms like Piazza and Stellar.

In the semester, I also took an Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP, for short) project. And I stayed for one more month at MIT to finish my project after the end of the semester. In the meanwhile, I worked under the supervision of Prof. Vincent Chan and his PhD student Matthew Carey. My UROP project is on the area of network and my research topic is “Simulation and Analysis of Slotted Aloha on Long-Delay Channel under Variable Packet Arrival Rate”. Working on this project, not only did I gain more experience and understanding on the research area, but I also got the chance to know the sweet and nice group of Professor Chan. It is truly a precious and memorable experience for me.



Figure 2: With Prof. Vincent Chan



Figure 3: With Students in Chan Group

Besides main courses, MIT also provides a large variety of PE classes and workshops. And I got the chance to know multiple sports that I had never touched before. During the long cold winter, skiing and skating are the most popular sports in Boston. There is a skating rink at MIT during the winter and there are multiple ski resorts in the countryside of Boston. I learned how to skate and ski during my stay at MIT. Although I am incorrigibly bad at both skiing and skating, I did have a lot of fun.

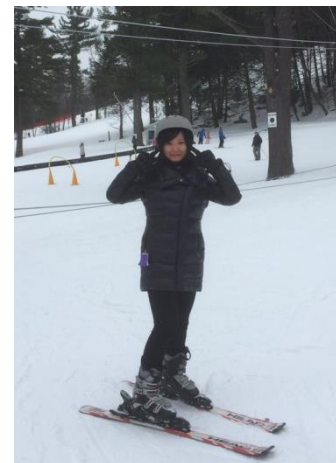


Figure 4: Skiing in the Countryside of Boston

In Boston, it starts to melt in late March. After that, water sports gradually take the place of ice sports. Located near the Charles River, MIT has advantaged conditions for developing multiple water sports. In fact, MIT has its own docks on the south shore of Charles River. And the best thing is that all the boats are free for MIT students. I took a sailing class in the

summer and almost fell into Charles River on my first sail. But as I grow familiar to the skills and tricks, I was finally able to sail in Charles River and ride the wind and the waves before I left.

In all, exchanging in MIT is a fruitful and unforgettable journey in my undergraduate study. Thanks again to all the departments involved for this valuable opportunity and your general financial support.