

Samantha Fong

*IDEA Center's Spotlight on UCSD's
Graduating Engineers*



Quick Facts

Grade: 5th Year (undergrad)

Major: Mechanical Engineering with a minor in
Environmental Systems

Outside interests: Reading, Doodling, and Traveling

Questions about your experiences:

What student orgs have you been a part of, and how have they benefited you?

Throughout my time at UC San Diego I've been an active member of Engineers for a Sustainable World (ESW), Engineers for a Cause, the Society of Women Engineers, the Jacobs Undergraduate Mentoring Program (JUMP), and the IDEA Scholar Program. I am grateful for the opportunities I had to work with student teams, plan campus events, and volunteer at outreach events. All of these experiences contributed a lot to my personal growth, confidence as a leader, and social network.



Why did you become a Gordon Scholar and how has the program helped you?

The best thing about being a Gordon Scholar is being part of a community of equally motivated students and learning from them. I got into student leadership during my first year at UC San Diego and I immediately felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities and expectations. This left me with a strong sense of imposter syndrome and a desire to prove that I was worthy of the leadership positions I had been selected for. I applied to be a Gordon Scholar because I wanted the skills to be a competent and impactful leader. Being a Gordon Scholar gave me the confidence to take ownership of my leadership skills and reminded me that I don't need to prove myself to be a successful leader.



Why were you interested in research and what advice would you give to students who want to become involved in research?

Research wasn't something I was initially interested in when I first got to UCSD. I was really intimidated by it and assumed it wasn't really for me. I was looking for a last minute summer opportunity at the end of my third year and by chance applied for Project Lim(b)itless. Project Lim(b)itless helped me understand what research is and allowed me many once in a lifetime opportunities. Two years later I am still involved in the project, working in another lab simultaneously, and planning on pursuing a PhD!

For students who want to get involved in research and even students who aren't so sure I would advise to just go for it. As a research institute UCSD offers a lot of unique research opportunities and you won't know if it is something you will like unless you try it. The best research candidates simply have the strongest motivation to get the work done.



What was your biggest accomplishment in your time at UCSD?

I'm not sure if there is any one moment that I would say is my biggest accomplishment at UCSD, but I am really proud of the groups of students I've gotten to mentor. Seeing the things they've been able to achieve and accomplish makes me feel like I've made a positive difference at UCSD.

What are your plans for the next 2-3 years?

For probably the first time in my life, I don't have any immediate plans for the future. I am generally someone who has backup plans for backup plans so this is a bit of a new feeling. Ultimately I'm planning on applying for PhD programs in Applied Ocean Science and Oceanography and in the meantime I've been on the search for research opportunities.

From your experiences, what advice would you offer current students?

All it takes is one step! UCSD offers so many opportunities but you need to step out of your comfort zone to really make the most of them. Also, it's okay to rely on other people. No one gets through engineering or life completely on their own, so ask for help, meet new people, and be a part of something greater than yourself!

