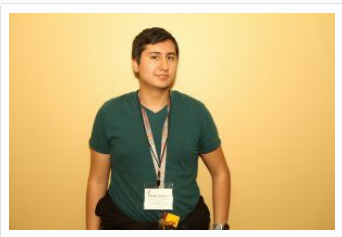




Alfredo Velasco II



Day 67: Goodbye, forever

Posted on August 14, 2017 by avelasco

No, this isn't a suicide note. I'm just getting used to the fact that I have to go away now. To any future applicants or interns reading this, don't do it. It's a time of waste and money and I wish I never came to Iowa. I'm kidding, of course. If you get accepted into an REU, you should really do it. Coming here has changed my entire life. I was a scared little kid from Oklahoma and I left as a scared little adult from Oklahoma. We're all scared. Nothing ever prepares you for life, but you just have to keep moving on. Will I ever get into grad school? Everyone seems to think so, but I'm not really sure. The point is that I'm going to try anyways and I would have never have done it. I've experienced so many events. Screw everyone!!! I'm back and bigger than ever! Lots of people have told me that I'd never be successful, but I proved them wrong. I've proved lots of people wrong. Sometimes, it's not good to listen to people. They're not always wrong. The world is my oyster and I'm getting my Perl necklace. I may be a multi-millionaire next time you see me. I could be the CEO of my own securities company on Wall Street. I could be the CEO on the verge of taking over Bill Gates. I could be the president. I could also be broke, divorced, and full of needles, but I like to be positive and think that won't happen. See you all one day, possibly, it really depends on what life has in store for us. Hopefully, you will all see me in New York or Boston. Maybe Philadelphia or DC will serve me well. I don't know. May God be with us all, unless you don't believe in him. In that case, you can have anyone you want with us.

I know I don't mention names in here for privacy reasons, but I'll break it this one last time. I want to thank everybody here for at least one thing.

Thank you, Eliot, for picking me up from the airport and giving me Palmer's food. Also, thank you for proving me right and showing everyone that the first rule of business ethics is that there are no ethics and morals are useless when it comes to business. I guess I really will have to be a wolf when I get to Wall Street.

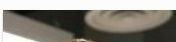
Thank you, Stephen, for telling me MIT is not good as undergraduate and that I may have just dodged a bullet by never getting in. Also, I want to thank you and Eliot for setting up this REU up for all of us to join. I also want to thank you both for getting additional funding for two extra interns who also had the pleasure of joining us.

Thank you, Angelica, for taking us on stuff and telling us all about how to do research and telling us stuff about grad school. Now I know grad school's not THAT tough and it's more in reach than I thought.

Thank you, Anna, for also taking us to places and telling me about New York. Now I know that living Queens is definitely a thing people do and that the subways are as awesome as I thought. I know you tell me not to move there, but you never told me where I should live either and I got to live somewhere. Sorry, but you made me love big cities more. Don't worry too much because there's a chance I'll live in Boston anyways.

Thank you, Jim (Dr. Oliver? I'm not quite sure. We've only met twice. I'm sorry), for telling us about grad school. You really told me all about it and I know everything I ever wanted to know about it. Thank you for letting us into VRAC and learn about VR. Also, thanks for pointing out or spelling mistake at our poster conference.

Thank you, Vijay, for letting us play around in the C6. It really is cool and I still can't believe we got to mess around with a supercomputer. Also, thanks for having a cool profile picture. You look like those cops in the really old TV shows and it makes me laugh.





*Y'all got some
competition here.
Better update your
profile pictures to
see if you can top
this*

Thank you Alex, for teaching us Solidworks and drinking from huge battles of water. I always knew it was normal to drink water.

Thank you, Jon, Stacy, and Adam, for teaching us Maya and Unity. It allowed me to make cool mountains and show off to everybody.

Thank you Kaitlyn and Jamiahus, for teaching us about HCI. You let me play a fun scavenger hunt and let everyone know that I am a professional video game connoisseur.

Thank you, Jon, for being my mentor and being so chill. It's too bad I'm not a psychologist because I think I'd try to work with you (but my girlfriend is a psychologist!!!! I'm not trying to say anything else). Fudge, I don't think I'll ever have as cool of a mentor. For everyone else, enjoy this going away present with we made for him. He said he laughed when he saw it.



*This not photoshop, as you may think, Jon.
This is legit*

Thank you, Lucia, for leading our meetings and telling us all about graduate school. Thanks for telling us about interviews and giving us your personal statements and applications (even if I think you only did that to brag about your 4.0 GPA (that's right. We have a smart mentor) because I got a few B's and my GPA is not perfect anymore) . You were also really nice and I can see why you and Jon are working together. You make perfect mentors and I'm never going to forget my time here partially because of you both.

Lastly, I want to thank my fellow REUers for helping me have a good time. Thanks for coming to my dorm when I offered food(like you'd say no anyways). You all made this experience something more than just an internship. It was like a summer camp where I got to meet a cool group of people.

Thank you, Kate, for being a mathematician like me, listen to me ramble on about Eminem, and never taking it seriously when I said you're not a mathematician.

Thank you, Chris, for understanding that gringo is not a racial slur and for giving me a band-aid when I cut my hand off. Even if you were too late and even though the gangrene got so bad that my whole arm had to be amputated, it's the thought that counts. Also, thanks for being a Southerner. Also, thanks for having a car.

Thank you, Emma, for hanging out with me when other people wouldn't. Thanks for talking to me and keeping me company.

Thank you, Jameel, for helping me through some tough times. You know what you did. Also, thanks for taking me to get my bag back and for occasionally taking all of us to places since you had a car.

Thank you, Sushi, for always knowing what to say when I have questions. I'm sorry I annoyed you with questions at home, but this was my first time being alone. Also, thanks for buying spices so that our food wouldn't taste so bland.

Thank you, Austin, for living so close that we had a vacuum cleaner, salad bowl, and a car. Rock climbing was fun, so thanks for that. Also, thank for bring the Star Wars movies and a TV so we could have our movie nights. I kind of now wish I got the Spider-man movies so we could have watched those. Also, I liked all of your memes. I don't think any of us could have made it through without your memes.

Thank you, Sofia, for being Mexican and having a mom who sent candy. Also, thanks for defending BBQ when it was brought up, even if our states have our own styles.

Thank you, Brittany, for being entertaining to watch.

Thank you, Natalie, for waking up so ridiculously early that I didn't usually have to go to work to an empty office. Also, thanks for not taking the ridiculous stuff I say too seriously(because some of you people can NOT recognize satire and sarcasm).

Thank you, Emmanuel, for recognizing that mathematicians are important and that it helped with our project and for generally being a cool partner.

Last of all, I want to thank you, Naly. You've been good to me and you've been really patient. I'm sorry that I left you for this opportunity, but I hope you can forgive me because this is really important for the future that we'll have together. I'm glad you came over for The Fourth of July because that pushed me to finish and work hard for us. Hopefully, if I do something like this again, you can find something similar so we can stay in the same town.

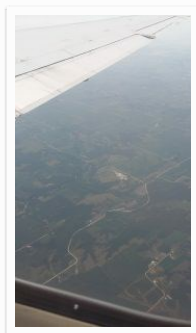
Anyways, thank you all for the opportunity. I'll donate some money if I'm really rich.

This morning(yeah. Now I'm staring my blog), I woke up and said goodbye to a few people since I knew I wouldn't be seeing them again. It was sad, so I had to have the last moments I could with them. I even helped take their bags because I'm so useful. Also, I had to wake up to finish packing and drop off my checked bag receipt. Soon, I had to leave with a few people. It should have felt like The Wolf of Wall Street, but it just didn't. Eventually, they left first on their flights and we had to say goodbye. I don't know what will happen after this. All I can do is hope that they have good lives afterwards.

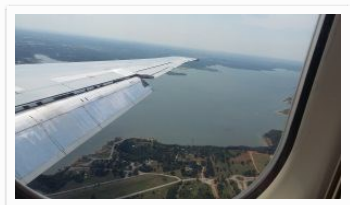
I eventually had to leave for my flight and go back home. It was an okay journey. Fun fact: did you know that the airport at the DFW area has a mini subway?!?!?! It's called Skylink and I can't believe that this exists!!!! I had to ride it to get to my gate. The thing that sucked was I didn't know which gate it was. I got several different answers. The monitors gave me an answer. The pilot gave me an answer. My phone gave me an answer. Finally, a worker gave me the right answer. and I got to my terminal in time.



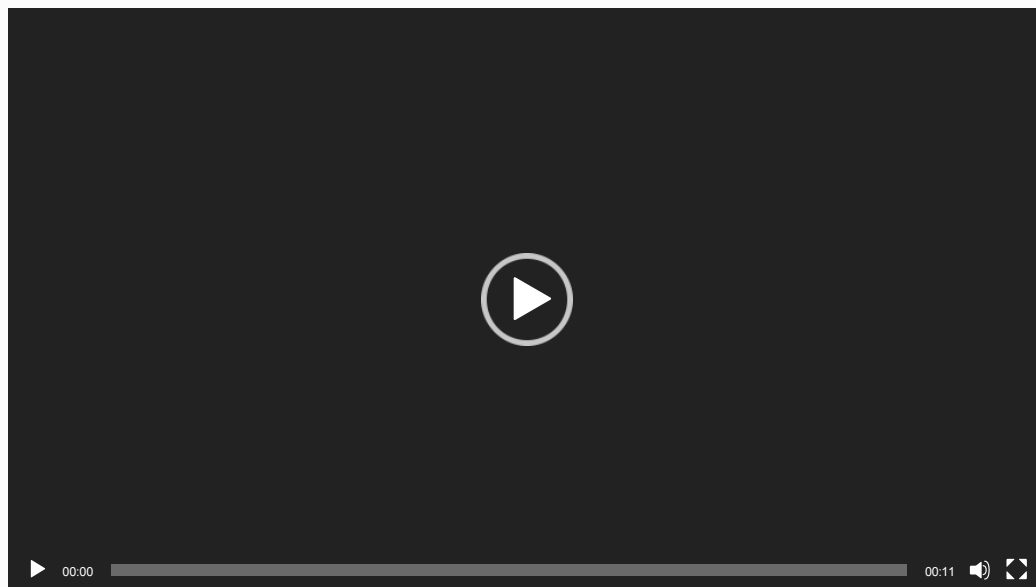
Yep, gate C6. I don't know what it meant either, but it must have meant something



First flight home



Hey! Look! Texas also has beautiful water



Second flight back home was also OK(sorry, I just realized that pun as I was typing this). The lady next to me was a native Tulsan and we had a nice conversation. She said she came back from a family reunion in Tennessee. She also asked me if photography was part of Computer Science and more photography questions. I wish my girlfriend was there to answer those questions.

Speaking of my girlfriend, my brothers and my mom came to pick me up. We went to my dad's bakery to say hi to him and get some delicious bread which I've been craving and missing since forever. Then, I got to go to my house and eat some tacos. Man, I miss tacos al pastor. They're so good and I couldn't believe I was back home. Unfortunately, it didn't last long because I had to go see my girlfriend. Yep, it was time after being away for ten weeks. She would be in Branson, MO, which is a three hour drive. Here was the problem; my phone doesn't want to charge unless it's connected to a computer. I don't know why, but that's how it is. I wasn't sure it would last long enough for my trip. I tested it out and it worked in my car!!! With that, I was ready to start the long drive over there I just played my Eminem music. Eventually, I met up with my girl and it was all worth it.

Sunday morning, we had a little fun in Branson before we left. We went to this place with animals and an arcade. Actually, that's all we did before we headed home. I don't know why, but Missouri is really hilly. I was going up and down all the way back home. I even drifted!!! In my defense, it was raining and I didn't see that turn soon enough. Also, my phone stopped charging. It said it was charging, but it wasn't. It slowly drained. I guess God really wanted me to be with my girlfriend and he offered me the miracle of a working charger. It's the only explanation I can offer. Maybe one of you electrical engineers can explain what happened. Anyways, the drive was eventually over and we got back. Fun fact: we passed by [the world's largest McDonald's](#)!!!!It's largest in terms of area and it's over a road. Unfortunately, it wasn't there anymore. I knew the building looked familiar, but I was confused since I didn't see the McDonald's logo and a later google search confirmed what I saw. Some news articles say it closes and opens, so it may come back again. I don't know. It's an hour away from home, so I can't really check on it too often. Anyways, that's it and I guess I'll have to go back. It's sad how no one will see this post since the program's been done for a while. I hope you all have a beautiful life and may our paths cross once again.

I'll be back one day.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 66: Last day



Posted on August 11, 2017 by avelasco

It's nice having a bike. It really is. Unfortunately, I had to return my bike today. It was my last day and I knew I wouldn't need it much longer. I went to return my bike, but no one was at the place where I got it. We were told morning, but not an actual time. I had to go to work, so I just left it there along with my helmet and water bottle. I had to take a bus back, but that's what happens when you have no bike. I actually went to the lab because my team was testing out this new environment, but I got there too late. My team had already left. The good news is I remembered where my flash drive is; it was in my suit pants, not my jeans. That's why I couldn't find it this morning.

What did we accomplish today? Not much. I don't think we had it in us to do much work. Plus, we didn't have much time before starting our days by doing the course evaluation. We just answered questions about the program.

After that, we went to lunch at this Thai place called The Spice. I got ribs and it was good. Not as good as Oklahoma, but still good. You know, there's this fake-Mexican restaurant called Los Cabos. I always get the ribs there. It's really good. Anyways, I had a fine time talking to the people around me, even if they were the mentors. When I was in high school, I actually preferred talking to teachers. They were more mature and I felt that I had better conversations with them. Yeah, I was weirdo who didn't fit in with my classmates. However, I developed important relationships that could never replace real friendships.

The cool part was that we got a bunch of trinkets for our time spent there. I even got reject from grad school! Well, what they said that is that so long as we can find a mentor who wants to work with us, we've been accepted into the HCI program. In other words, I've been rejected. It's always sad to hear bad news before you leave.



Our mystery present



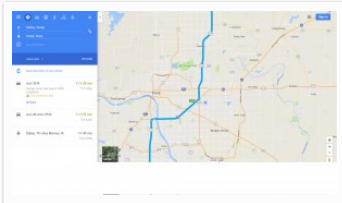
My rejection letter





About dang time I got recognized for my talents

The ride back felt like the ending of The Wolf of Wall Street. I had to sit in that car waiting for my impending doom to come to me. At least we had a fun mystery waiting for us. We talked to our Solidworks instructor for a bit. Fun fact: he drove through Tulsa once. Another fun fact: he was disappointed because the highway he took did not take him downtown. He probably took Route 169. It goes north and south, but never goes downtown. Honestly, he didn't miss much. I wouldn't consider downtown to be "Tulsa." There are very few reasons to go downtown and I rarely go. The University of Tulsa isn't downtown. Most people don't live downtown (partly is because of a lack of grocery stores and they want to avoid the parking costs, which you can't avoid by not having a car since you need a car if you want to live in Oklahoma), no schools are there. I guess if you want to go to the BOK center to see a concert or see a show at the Performing Arts Center, that would be it. I actually saw The Nutcracker twice. It's amazing. I also saw this play called [The last Days of Judas Iscariot](#) (fun fact: one of the actors in it was a PhD student at my university and I recognized him). Anyways, my point is that I don't blame him.



Yeah, Google says don't even try to visit The Blue Dome District

Later, we decided to have Hickory Park at the park, just like our first picnic. It was nice and we even played soccer. I scored the most goals because I'm so Mexican. Yep, call me Messi. I had a nice time, even if I got really tired and out of breath. Plus, I broke my glasses after running into someone. It was worth it since our team won. Also, we got little going away presents. I got these wax apples that you can't eat for some reason. He also gave us some of this Mexican candy. It's going to be sad leaving Iowa. I'm glad you all showed me a fun time while I was here.



Candies that we got

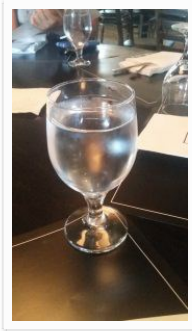


I'll explain this to some of you gringo-Americans. We don't eat these candies. This meme explains it all. I actually tried it for the first time and I have to say that it's good. I've never eaten because it's worthless to us. The best that I can explain it is that it's like getting candy corn on Halloween. It's not awful, but you know there are WAY better options.



Wednesday, we worked on our paper and made sure we were ready for our poster session on Thursday.

After work, we went to this Italian restaurant called +39. It's really hipster-y and I liked the spaghetti that I had. I still think mine is better, but whatever. I had a nice time with everybody.

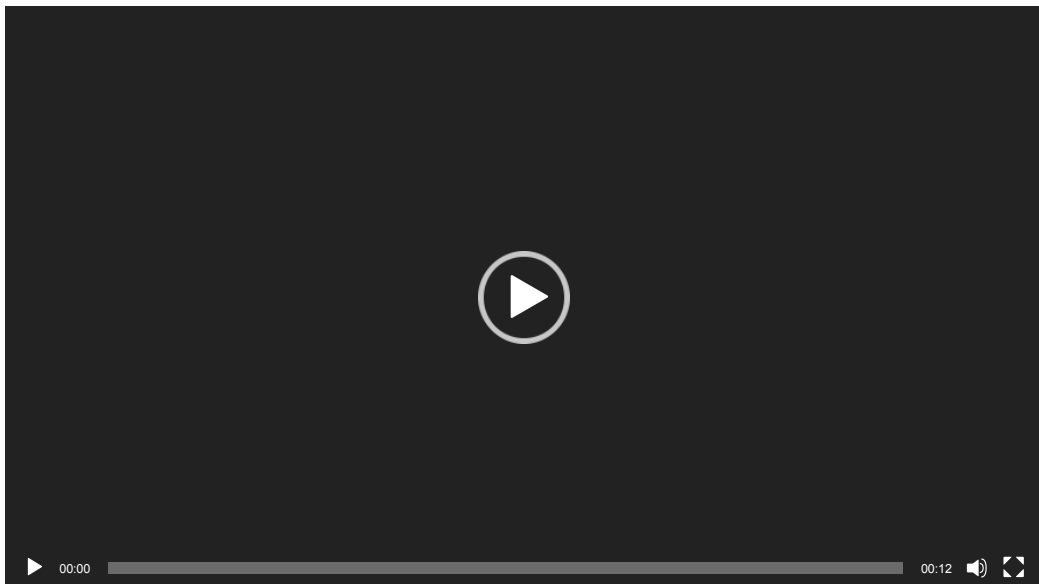


What'd I tell ya? This water is served in a fancy cup



Even freaking Bono came to this place

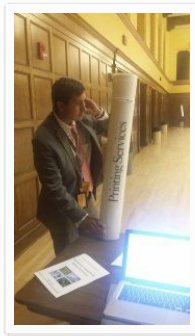
After eating, we all went ice skating because someone had their own ice skates and didn't want to waste them. I felt like I was in Rocky. It was a lot of fun even though I fell once. What's funny is that some people were too afraid to get on the ice because they could fall, but it's not that bad. I don't know. All I know is that I had a lot of fun with everybody. I think I want to take my girlfriend ice skating now. I wonder if there are any places back in Tulsa. You know, I ice skated one time before and I felt like a master. It was really hard to skate at this place. I think it's because the shoes weren't as tight. Ice skating should be heck on your ankles. I know this because that's why Rocky didn't ice skate; his coach told him it's bad for his ankles.



No, I didn't crash into Kate(even if people feel like I should, sometimes).

Thursday, we had our poster session. I got to dress in a dope suit, carry posters, talk, and see a few other posters. I didn't see so many because the session was so short (yeah, two hours fly by when you're having fun). Sorry for you other people. I really wish I could have seen other peoples' posters and presentations. At least I got to make some funny memes from it. Not many since I don't

have all of the pictures, but I do have this one.



*Rare picture of British
WWII soldier receiving
orders to launch a
mortar strike against
Russian enemies.
Picuture taken in 1944,
Normandy Bay, France.
Colorized, 2018*



*I don't know how to caption this one. 1964
New York World's Fair?*

The event was fun and way easier than my first poster session. Especially since it wasn't being judged. It's a nice ending to our part of the research.

Posted in Uncategorized | [Leave a reply](#)

Day 62 and 63: Last Monday, I Gave You My Heart



Posted on August 2, 2017 by avelasco

I'm kidding, of course. I don't have a heart. Anyways, I have to work again. Just making our poster better and putting in some data. It's crazy how things started to go wrong when our poster deadline was approaching. I'm honestly not sure what I should say. Life is starting to slow down a little around these parts. I will say that I now realize I have to eat all of the food I have at my dorm because I'll have to throw it out. I realize I forgot that I had a two salads. Good thing they didn't go bad. Even the gym is starting to be empty. Mondays are usually full, but it was quiet. Everyone's realizing that they should enjoy the good things they have in Ames. Anyways, I went to sleep early because I was tired.

Tuesday is the same old, same old. I did a bunch of work and made some cool graphs. We also revised our poster since we had the chance to make a quick little edit. After work, I did go back to the Irish restaurant for another burger because it was so good and I knew I wouldn't have another chance. The only problem is I forgot my bag there and the people now probably think I'm an OSU student. At least the burger was worth it. Plus, I'll get it tomorrow.

Posted in Uncategorized | [Leave a reply](#)

Day 60-61: Goodbye, Yellow Brick Road



Posted on July 31, 2017 by avelasco

Saturday, I went to the farmer's market for the last time. I decided to get more of those tacos and I finally found out what the name of the restaurant is called! It's called Carlos Quesadillas and they're located at the North Grand Mall. That being said, I think I'm more excited to eat the tacos they have at home. I miss tacos. Anyways, I went to the music store afterwards since I was already on Main Street. I mostly goofed around on the piano and bought this book full of Queen songs. I only got it for it's rendition of You're My Best Friend. You can listen to it [here](#). It doesn't sound as good because it's MIDI, but you can use your imagination. I hope to learn it soon.

I didn't do anything for the rest of the day. I mean, I studied a little for the GRE, but I also did nothing. I have no idea what the GRE does. I've heard that it's not really important, but all the people I've seen accepted into the programs I'm interested in applying have super high scores. I hate applying for grad school. Why can't it be easy? Why can't I get accepted already? Why can't they send people specifically to look for me? Why can't I be successful already? Why can't I get a 170 on the math portion? I just want a good and happy life. You know, I could never get a 36 on the math portion of the ACT, even though I was pretty sure I could do it. There was always one question that would trip me up and mess up my score. I don't what anyone says, but I think I can do it. I think I can get a good score on the GRE. The math isn't that hard, I just need a refresher on some of the geometry. I'm just going to have to pray and hope that I do better.

Sunday, I went rock climbing at this place called [Climb Iowa](#). My roommate was nice enough to take a few of us there since he's a rock climbing enthusiast/connoisseur/expert/aficionado/genius/activist. He's not all of those, but he's probably some of them (he never quite told me what his deal with rock climbing is). For lunch, I had Popeye's because I miss fried chicken. Also, I had to work a little bit on our project. I sent my mentor our data so he could do statistical tests and help us on our interpretations because ,apparently, we were doing them wrong. I blame R.

I went to Main Street to practice my Queen music for a bit (it still sounds like crap when I play it) and had to say goodbye to that famous road. At least I got to watch Star Wars when I came back. Nope, I can't believe how soon it is until I leave everything behind. I think I'm starting to realize why people are so adamant about moving away from home. They get attached to all of the good things. I'll miss Jeff's pizza. I'll miss Aunt Maude's. I'll miss that Irish restaurant. I'm going to miss having a gym close-by. I'm going to miss being only 15 away from a place on a bike. I'm going to miss the freedom to call professors by their first name. Most of all, I'm going to miss all of the fun times that I've had with everyone here. They always say that good things come to an end, but I never believed them. At least I'll get to see my family again.

Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

Day 57-59: Why couldn't we have computers that don't suck?



Posted on July 31, 2017 by avelasco

Today, I made more cool graphs. I'm glad that I got exposed to R because I honestly don't know how I would do some of this data stuff. I guess I should actually be thankful. Anyways, computers suck because they don't work. We had to throw away two days of participants because our computers weren't working. Hooray for Windows! I don't actually think it's a Windows thing. At least we got Friday's participants to work.

Thursday, we had a lecturer who dealt specifically with the inequalities that are seen in public school systems. He was very interesting and I really enjoyed listening to his stories. It's sad how we won't have anymore speakers.

Friday, I had to dress in my symposium clothes and I look dope as fudge! Am I worried for the symposium? No, I've already done one. It was actually a competition, but I didn't know that until I got there. I don't think this one will be a competition. Anyways, sorry for not writing much, but I really just did what I said in the first paragraph.

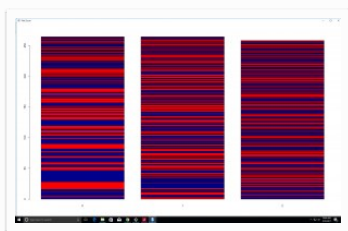
Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 55-56: R you gonna go Windows shopping or give me a Perl necklace



Posted on July 27, 2017 by avelasco

Fun fact: `\n` does not print out a newline when you program in C#. I discovered this a while back when I was writing scripts that would record our data for us. The simple fix was to type in `\r\n`. I'm going to get a little political now, so stop reading if you can't take it. Windows is not a good operating system. UNIX based operating systems are so much better. The command line is better. It doesn't take up a crap-ton of memory. Most programming languages work on it. Everything is better. Anyways, here's the thing about regular expressions. I'm a genius when it comes to regular expressions. I'm kidding, of course, but I do find myself using them frequently for even small programming tasks. They're very useful and I find myself using them all of the time. When I took my Comparative Programming Language course(it's a class where you learn different programming languages(and learn the theory behind them, but that part's not as important. Sorry if you're a theoretical computer scientist)), we had to learn five languages: F#, Perl, Go, C, and Prolog. For those of you non-programming people, Perl is really good at text-processing and one of the things that are needed for text processing are regular expressions, which are patterns you need to find in text(such as five numbers proceeded by the letter a, etc.) and when I started working for him in his Bioinformatics lab, I used Perl a lot. I'm fairly certain this is one of the reasons we all had to learn Perl; in case we would work for him. Anyways, we use Perl all the time, but I also use regular expressions all the time. He tells me regular expressions are not the solution to everything, but it's always funny how he only wanted me to use part of his lectures. Anyways, I tested my regular expression on this [website](#) and it worked, but not in my script. I spent lots of time trying to figure out why it wasn't working, until I realized that I should have been using `\r\n` instead of `\n`. Anyways, I hate Windows because it has the dumbest way to do new lines. At least we're getting data collected. We even made our first chart!



I don't know what it means either

This boring part of data processing is trying to fix the errors made by our participants, which requires me to go through the text files and try to figure out what their actual responses were. If only I could have written a Perl script to do that for me, but I can't always trust computers. Another annoying thing is outliers since we're not sure what to do with them. Bad responses are important because they show that the participants were confused in a trial, but they also skew the data. Pretty much, outliers suck, I hate manually doing stuff, and Windows sucks. At least I'm learning R (again).

Posted in Uncategorized | 1 Reply

Day 54-55: Up the creek without a pattle



Posted on July 26, 2017 by avelasco

Good thing I didn't do anything last night because I had to go kayaking today. Actually, I watched Spider man 1 and 2 since I watched this [video](#)(warning! It may not make sense to you) and I remembered how good those movies were. Honestly, I had lots of fun on the water! Kayaking is so much fun. I felt like Michael Phelps on the water. I don't even want a rowing machine. Kayaking machines are a better workout. Anyways, it was really fun and I'm glad that I did it (even if I didn't get a haircut. Well, maybe not). We had a fun time playing this game called [Contact](#). I'm so glad I had a decent enough vocabulary to play okay. It was over too soon, but all good things must end.





Beautiful view of the Arkansas river



Why is the Illinois River so long?



Fun fact: The Nile River is the longest river in America. The biggest river is the Missississiiisiiisppiiiii



Burritos are WAY harder to roll than tacos

We were all hungry for lunch when we got back, so we decided to go eat at this Irish restaurant. I had a burger with fries and it was delicious. If there's one thing I like about America, it's steak, fries, and coke. No offense, but I'm (a little) glad that some of our health problems come from having too much food. Considering the alternative, I'd rather die full than hungry. Burgers are also nice. Later, we also stopped by Staples because of reasons.



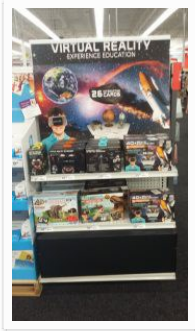
My only regret is that there weren't any more fries



Caramel cheesecake



Not as good as my girlfriend's photography skills, but I tried to take a picture of the sun



Well, VRAC. I guess we should pack it up. They got us beat

Sunday, not much was done. I will say that some of us watched Star Wars. It was fun. I didn't really watch most of it, but the parts I watched were still nice. Question for Star Wars nerds. Why didn't Uncle Ben just use the Jedi mind trick to convince the storm troopers to kill themselves and Darth Vader?



I promised y'all a meme, so here it is. SO to Emma for taking this. SO to me for captioning it

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 51-53: Nurse, we're losing him! Check the pulse



Posted on July 24, 2017 by avelasco

First day of being a scientist. Yep, it's actually not that hard. All you gotta do is wear a shirt and tie and you look like a professional. They always say that clothes make the man, so I became a doctor and it worked. I wasn't even nervous. Why didn't I do this for our presentation? I don't know, but I'm glad I did it. I'm not going to tell you too much because our IRB has a confidentiality clause, but I'm glad we finally got some real people to help us. Thanks people!!! I can't say who you are, but you know who you are and we're thankful that you helped us. Anyways, there's not much I can say, but I will talk about Thursday.

Our mentor spoke to us today and he told us a whole lot. Fun fact: [HM](#) was a patient who had his hippo campus removed to treat his seizures. While it was successful, it made it impossible for him to store long term memories. He was used to demonstrate that muscle memory is read and different from long term memory, as he could not remember having a skill, but was able to demonstrate the fact that he retained it. We had a nice talk and I still miss my dad's bread.

That's all I really had to say. Sorry for being so late, but we had to collect our data. Besides, I write too many of these anyways.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 50: Almost time for our first experiment



Posted on July 18, 2017 by avelasco

As you can probably guess by the title, we have our first tomorrow. We even made builds of our experiments. Am I nervous? Hecks yeah!!!! What if I forget something? What if I say something stupid? What if my data goes bad because I didn't delete the garbage files? There are so many things that can go bad, but at the same time, I'M A FREAKING SCIENTIST!!!!!!!!!!!! You know those guys who carry a clipboard while you do stuff? That's me! I wish I had a lab coat, but I'm not doctory enough to have one. I think I might wear a white dress shirt. White tops always mean that you are the authority and that you can boss people around. Why am I in charge of so much power?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?! I never knew that I would actually run an experiment and it's kind of cool. I still wish I had a lab coat. Why couldn't I have a lab coat? Actually, our mentor says it's stupid when experimenters wear them because it doesn't mean they're more qualified. Maybe they'll think of me that way when they see my dress shirt. You know what, worst case scenario, I'm wearing a white tee.

Today, we had a pretty cool guest lecturer. First of all, he is RIPPED. Why are all of the Mechanical Engineering professors so buff? Maybe I should be a mechanical engineer professor so that I can be buff. Aside from that, he's a deputy and scuba diver. He said he showed that using VR for welding schools is cheaper, and sometimes more effective than doing real welding. The only downside was that some people didn't appreciate the costs of the materials since virtual materials are cheap. He also made an expanding capsule (patented) that's used for nasal tubes that go to your stomach. The idea is that the end would be stuck so deep in your throat

that your esophagus muscles automatically swallow the capsule (along with the tube) and go to your stomach. It's used for dementia patients who fight doctors. Also, one experiment had people going around and shooting guns. Another cool thing about him is that he traveled around the world for two years. He even worked as a longshoreman in China. Funny thing was that his coworkers were from Taiwan. He also went to Iceland and worked as a bouncer in Johannesburg. Also, one shift had him working at 3:00 AM in case he needed to restart a script. At least he watched *I Love Lucy*. Fun fact: meth heads will lie to you within a few seconds because they are so drugged out. Personally, *The Wolf of Wall Street* (the book, not the movie) already convinced me not to do drugs, but I'll take what I can get. Lastly, road construction doesn't take long because of the roads. It takes a long time because of the pipes that run underneath the roads.

The last thing I want to rant about is barbershops. Did you know you need appointments? I didn't. Near my house, you could walk in at any time and just wait your turn. Do these barbers not want money? I guess not, which is fine because it's their business, but I need a haircut. Seriously, why is my hair so long? I'm thinking of just getting a pair of scissors and cutting it myself, but I did that one time and it was bad. I felt a little better, but I also felt bad. Uggggghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. Why do I have to be cursed with long, beautiful, flowing hair? I probably won't ask that when I'm going bald. I'm kidding, I'm never going bald. You can look at my dad to confirm that. Anyways, I'm nervous, my hair is long, I lost my glasses yesterday and I don't know where it is since I asked and no one turned in anything at UDCC, and I'm going to have to fake being a scientist. I don't know what song I'll have to use, or what TV show, but I hope that I can fake something. I'm great at faking stuff. It's lying, but to yourself. Trust me, I'm great at lying. I even lie to myself. It's a very useful skill to have, as long as you can use it correctly. One day, I can even be president. Wish me luck tomorrow, and Goodnight, San Francisco. Que Dios nos bendiga.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 49: Ever watched House of Cards?



Posted on July 18, 2017 by avelasco

In *House of Cards*, there was a scene where the main character told these interns, or something like that, to stay in this room and write out a new education bill. They were only shown for a second, but it was obvious that they were hot, sweaty, and tired. I think I understand how those interns felt. Yep, working for 100 hours will take a toll on you. It's insane that some people do this everyday, or even more. I say this, but I'll probably get used to it. No matter how crazy of a schedule you give people, they always learn to adapt. It's just a big initial shock. Sorry for being so tired, but programming in Perl does that to you. Back at my school, I was working in the field of Bioinformatics, which uses Perl. It's actually in the first paragraph of its Wikipedia page. Anyways, work was hard and long. The only thing that makes it better is the fact that we're starting our experiment soon (our first participant is showing up on Wednesday) and data analysis is probably going to be easy(after all, I am a mathematician. Actually, having two mathematicians should make this very easy). I still can't believe that we have that poster to do. Anyways, we worked today. Sorry I didn't see anybody today. I didn't miss you either.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 47 and 48: Yep, more volleyball and apple crumble



Posted on July 18, 2017 by avelasco

Saturday was spent lying in bed and watching *The Mindy Project*. I'm kidding, my team had work to do and we were going to get it done. We worked on our project and it's pretty much done. I know I always say that, but it's because something stupid always keeps breaking at inconvenient times. At least we can record our data. Also, we ate food at Starbucks (literally eat there. I had my sandwich from Potbelly's Sandwich Shop) which was a good little break from working. We got our project very close to completion, which is good because we're going to start running experiments this week.

After work, I had to go to the gym and get ready to go to Hickory Park. Yes, I know that I went there with my girlfriend already, but it was good and I was ready to go again. Anyways, our little group had fun eating more BBQ, solving puzzles, and coloring rabbits. I had a burger (because I'm a real American). Overall, I had a great time with everybody.

After that, we all hung out, played volleyball with water balloons, I had to save a whole bunch of phones since some people wouldn't respect the no water zone (come on, like you're gonna pay for them). then we hung out some more in the dorms. I couldn't spend much time after, but I had a fun time. It's nice to see your coworkers as actually human beings instead of meat bags that sit around you at work.

I'll go ahead and throw in Sunday while I'm at it.

I went to go get a haircut, but all of the barbershops were closed!!! Seriously, isn't someone so desperate for money that they would be willing to work on Sundays? Now, I'm stuck with this crazy long hair that would make the Beatles tell me to stop being a hippie. Anyways, I decided to go and get more apples since I was already out. I decided I would make another apple crumble since we need participants for our study. I got one person who says they can do it, so I guess it wasn't a complete waste. If you want to help, ask anyone in our group.

Posted in Uncategorized | 3 Replies

Day 46: At least we can give up



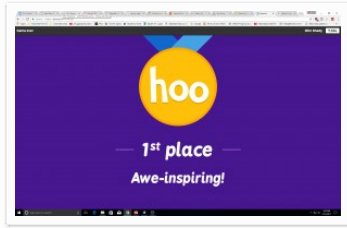
Posted on July 17, 2017 by avelasco

Today, we met our project mentors and they said it's okay that everything's not perfect. It's good enough and it shouldn't affect our responses. I'm glad that we've been appreciated for our hard work. Anyways, we've done pretty good work and we're getting close to being done. That being said, we still have a lot of work to do and we don't have enough time during the normal working hours.

For journal club, the article discussed trust in automated systems. There were many questions, but I got lost in the paper. I later realized that it was studying other papers instead of actually running an experiment, which cleared up why the methods section was missing. I don't have much to say since I wasn't good at reading this article (sorry, people).

We had another HCI lecture today. We talked about interactive media, which is using computers and technology. Lots of video games were discussed, which is cool because I know video games. I used to be a video game connoisseur and could tell you many

things about the history of video games. I knew which where the famous games that were a little obscure, and I played so many that it would blow your mind. Anyways, that knowledge came into play when we played Kahoots and I dominated everyone in the competition.



Humble brag. I had no life for many years

Our instructor even let us ask him about graduate school, which is nice because there's never too much to know about grad school.

I feel like I did more that night, but I can't remember. Oh well.

Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

Day 45: Why is nothing working

2

Posted on July 17, 2017 by avelasco

Today, we went to our experiment lab to work on our project. We're trying to get our teleportation + rotation mechanic to work, but it doesn't. You can't change the player move unless you move the camera rig, which never has the same axis as the player view. Basically, you need too much math to figure out even the simplest rotations needed. It helps that I'm an applied math major, but it never seems that my partner(who is, along with Computer Science, also a math major) and I can never figure out how to do the rotations. We spent lots of time working on it before going to our luncheon lectures.



Arroz con pollo. It's actually the first time I've eaten that since our etiquette lunch. Also, I still think my dad's bread is better

Our guest speaker was a really nice guy. He's an education person and he's over at the Veterinary building at ISU because he's trying to figure out if students learn better when they have their lectures recorded and put online for students to watch. Turns out that in many cases, it doesn't hurt the students' performances. Also, fun fact; playing Chess with your friends and in competitions actually makes you worse at Chess than doing analytics and seeing what good strategies are. As you may have heard, I also looked at some Math memes. It's nice to know that my second major actually became useful for something.

Lastly, we had to do another ethics course. It was mostly specialized in business ethics. It's hard to be in the business world. I'm still scared I won't be ready for the business world. My dad sometimes tells me that I'm good at school, but I have trouble at real life. Hopefully, I'll be ready for the cruel and cold business world. He even told us that doing your 9-5 isn't even good enough anymore. One professor's wife works 11 hours with no lunch break. It's a little sad how being an adult means no free time, but I guess that's life. Hopefully, life will work out for me.

Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

Day 44: Presenting for real

2

Posted on July 17, 2017 by avelasco

So, we got a little work done. We're trying to get our pointer to lock on to our markers and that works, but the rotation part of it doesn't. You get rotated in different ways and I can't figure out how to fix it. Seriously, why doesn't it work? I've finally made a decision that I'm never going to work on VR in the future. It's so difficult and it never works the way we expect it to. This is an infuriating project and I just want everything to work properly. I really hope we can get it done soon because this program's almost over and we need to start collecting the data soon. I really wish we could have more time. It's funny because we started off at a good pace, but now everything's starting to dawn on us. May God lead us through the way.

Anyways, the real story is that we had to present our mid-oral presentations. I knew we were pretty much done, but I was nervous. Whenever I'm nervous about a presentation, I always listen to *Lose Yourself* because of one line: "He's nervous, but on the surface he looks calm and ready." I think that being able to look calm on the surface is an amazing ability to have. I used to be like that in high school. One person asked me how I managed to not get nervous and that answer was that it was a little bit of confidence and lying and saying I'm not nervous. I made sure to at least play it in my head because it would push me to do better. What made it difficult is that we were the first group to present (thanks person whose name I won't mention). Overall, I think our group did an excellent job presenting. I messed up some enunciation, but I didn't crash and burn. Plus, we were able to answer the questions thrown at us. The other presentations were nice. One presentation read *Equilibrium Theory Revisited: Mutual Gaze and Personal Space in Virtual Environments* for their lit review and it's terrifying. It was about how close people get to objects when they look like humans. One of the humanoids could blink and it would constantly look at you no matter where you were in the room. It sounds really creepy and I would come nowhere near close to that thing if I was doing the experiment. Another project had people walking in a curved path to zigzag in a room. Also, I was glad to see the progress that our REU groups made. It's nice to see that they got so far and presented so well. Keep it up, people.

After presentations were over, I wrote a couple of blogs, went to the gym, then watched the new Spider man movie. I took a bus because I felt that everyone was leaving too late for us to make it on time and it worked; I got there 30 seconds before they did. I'm never sure how long trailers and previews are, but they were right; I wouldn't have missed the movie. Anyways, I really liked the movie. I'm not going to write a movie review because I'm really bad at telling if a movie's good or not(I didn't see why people hated the Andrew Garfield movies). I will tell you some things, like Micheal Keaton was cool, Aunt May definitely got older, Tom Holland still looks the same, and I still think it should have been set in Manhattan). Actually, rant.

Why does this Spider-man live in Queens? Spider-man is known for swinging from tall buildings, so why is he in not in Manhattan? Manhattan has all of the tall buildings, so it would only make sense that he frequents there. There's a reason Spider-man's not swinging from the wheat fields of Kansas. Also, I have nothing against Queens, if that's what you're guessing. All of the boroughs are beautiful and have their own distinct features. My hotel was was in Flushing and I thought it was a nice place. I only wish I had more time to explore all of the other boroughs. Anyways, my other complain was that Aunt May is young, so she could have a good career that could support an apartment in Manhattan. Old Aunt May probably had rent control this one could just have a good career. Make her a head financial analyzer or something. Anyways, it was a good movie, but Tobey Maguire will always be my original Spider-man.

Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

Day 42: MCA presentations

Posted on July 12, 2017 by avelasco

Yep, today was the day of MCAs. We all worked on our MCAs because today was a big day. In fact, since nothing else happened, I'll skip to that.

It was supposed to be at 2:00 PM, but when that time came around, there was nobody telling us what to do. I wasn't sure what was going on until we were told that the C6 wasn't working and it would start 45 minutes later. No offense, but I think that my roommate had the best thing. It was a game where you could explore different environments. My favorite one was Boston in the winter (but then he told me it was actually Canada. I'm still not sure). Also, I think my zombie game was fun. I liked seeing everybody's reactions. The annoying thing is that the Vive doesn't always work, which sucks because you're supposed to have two guns and only one controller works. The problem was we couldn't vote for our own group (even though we technically did different things, but I guess it's a way of splitting up the votes. Then again, there are voting systems that already fix this problem) so I voted for the 3D printing group since one of them made a Klein bottle. I only did it because I couldn't imagine how you would make one in SolidWorks and I had to give them something for it(and no, it's not because I'm a mathematician). When the votes where tallied up, we won! Then, the score was changed and the C6 group won. I'm pretty it's only because they're cheating and had a fancy \$8,000,000,000,000,000.00 freaking supercomputer to help them. Also, lots of us apparently did our presentations wrong. Apparently, I was supposed to talk about my challenges and experiences. What? I didn't know that! I thought we were supposed to discuss our final result! Why didn't anyone tell me this before? Actually, lots of us weren't really sure what we were supposed to have done anyways. Only the 3D printing group knew and I don't know how they knew. You know, I remember that one of our mentors did show me an email because I asked her what I was supposed to present. First of all, I guess I misunderstood what she told me because my presentation was wrong. Second, I kind of wish I had asked to be forwarded that email. Well, it's too late, but at least my game was awesome. [Here's a link to it in case you didn't get a chance to play it.](#)

After work, we got some tea. I actually didn't drink any because I don't like teas of any kind, but it was a nice little walk. After that, I worked with my group on our presentation. We're pretty much done already. I'm glad we're getting stuff done, even if I feel that we're not getting things done quickly enough.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 40(and 41): Real taco tuesday

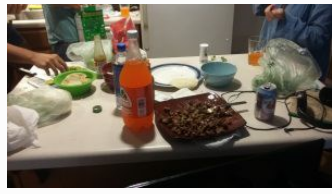
Posted on July 12, 2017 by avelasco

I began my Saturday morning by working on my MCA. The good news is the the lab where my team will present our experiment has a working Vive. It was okay, until it stopped working. I didn't know what to do, so I went to the gym. When I came back, I knew that I had to make some tacos for my American-American friends. I don't know why there's a stereotype that we are lazy because making tacos is hard as fudge. Making the meat was okay, but trying to push a million tortillas when you only have one microwave is a difficult task. You also can't put too many at the same time because the tortillas in the middle would be cold. Ay ay ay!!! Fun fact: We don't say that phrase as often as depicted on TV, nor do we say it with that much energy. My parents seldom say it and when they do, it's because they're tired or stressed. It's never with as much energy as on TV. Also, I burnt my hands so many times getting the tortillas out of the microwave. Plus, I managed to cut myself again. I will never take my tacos for granted ever again. Also, I made people try Jarritos and I'm glad I did. These tacos were great and I'm glad I had the help of two people(my girlfriend and a coworker).



You should always get your tacos medium-rare. I'm kidding, I'm pretty sure you shouldn't do that and I didn't care at this point to keep cooking. Plus, I

cooked the meat for a long time, so I don't know why I was seeing pink. Lastly, I'm not sorry I took this picture after I already took a bite. I was hungry, burnt, bleeding, and stressed out from cooking so much



As you may have heard already, I had to defuse a bomb. I'd be a terrible bomb technician. I'd probably have my headphones in while someone's giving me crucial information about the bomb. Aren't they supposed to blow those things up anyway? I guess you can't do that in a populated area, so maybe I'd be a liability. Then again, my mind can't always compute the gravity of a situation, so I could be fearless. Then again, I do get overwhelmed, so I don't know what would happen. Anyways, it was fun and I get to defuse more bombs in the future.

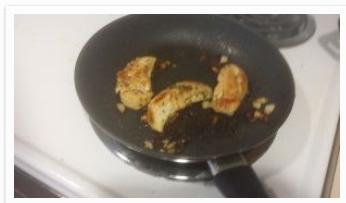
Day 41 was boring. I made chicken, worked out, finished my MCA, and went to Walmart. Walmart sucked because it was so far away and I had to bike a lot. I almost died, my cut opened up again(I actually scanned my own salad and wiped the cart because I felt bad for the employees who work there. If you got \$5.50 an hour, I wouldn't clean off somebody's blood and get infected with Malaria, asthma, HPV, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z, or whatever diseases kids get these days). My bags were ripping, it was hot, my bike was terribly off-balance, my mom called (and she hung up because I told her that I had to carry stuff), I had to carry toilet paper and paper towels because they don't fit in bags, and it was miserable. Thank goodness that somebody happened to be driving by and offered to drive me home. Honestly, I don't know how I would have made it home otherwise. No, I couldn't take the bus because I would have had to wait for another 45 minutes. If only Ames had a subway that comes around every few minutes. I guess I'll have to wait until I live in a big city. Actually, I'll go ahead and talk about this now.

I LOVE subways. When I went to New York, I was blown away by the subway. It's incredible coming from a town where absolutely nothing is within walking distance. I'm looking it up and it takes about an hour to get from my house to my university by bus. It normally takes 15 minutes. To go to my high school takes the same amount of time, whether or not you take the bus and it's 34 minutes away. It's ridiculous how far away everything is when you don't have a car. There, as long as you have a subway card, you can get anywhere. I've spent many hours looking subway maps because of how cool they are. I think it's awesome that I wouldn't need a car. Honestly, I don't like driving. It's dangerous and I don't know how I haven't gotten in a car wreck yet. Sometimes, I've been in cases where I should have had an accident, but didn't. I can only thank God and the other people for looking out. In a city, I wouldn't have to put myself into so many dangerous situations. Also, subways come around more often than buses do. I can tell you that it's miserable when you miss a bus and have to wait for an hour. Subways come around every few minutes. The major problem is that they have delays and it goes against the purpose of having a subway. They're supposed to be fast-ish because they don't have to deal with traffic, but they don't do that because of delays. One day, I want to build a better subway system. I mean, I'll probably get other people to help because I can't do it alone, but I'll help out. Maybe I'll make it automated. I don't know if I will because I feel bad for the conductors and I want them to have jobs, but something will be automatic. You know that some souvenirs actually have pictures of the MTA map on them? I can tell you that I'm no different myself. I've stared at the subway map many times. The cool thing is Wikipedia has a vector file, and you can see every detail you want to of the subway system. My point is that I love subways. It's a major reason I want to go to a big city.

Back to Walmart, I was sad when I got home. My spaghetti sauce fell and opened up. I was too tired to pick it up, so I only got it when I put my other stuff away. I wanted to clean it, but I didn't know how. I wish I had a hose to spray it down or something. I don't even a vacuum! I don't know how to clean it. I'm sorry for whoever has to do it now. I would help if I knew who you were.



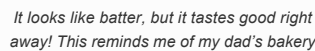
Before



4


Posted on July 11, 2017 by avelasco

After work and working out, I played with a volleyball with some people. It wasn't real volleyball. You had to catch it, which we did because the ball is too heavy to hit the normal way. There were even new people over there. Fun fact: one of them's from Boston and sometimes uses a Boston accent. Anyways, they seemed like cool people and did decently on volleyball (but not as good as me) and everybody had fun. After volleyball, I went over for some banana pudding. It was delicious. I now officially like banana pudding. I don't know what it is about banana, but everything can hold a banana is delicious. Who would think that bread goes well with a banana? Also, why does banana pie taste good? Anyways, it's delicious.



Posted in Uncategorized | 4 Replies

Posted on July 9, 2017 by avelasco





Good news. I finally got that poster that I wanted from the Des Moines Art Festival. I mean, my girlfriend got it, which was the point. Now, my art collection is complete

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 37: Back at it again

3

Posted on July 8, 2017 by avelasco

Yep, it's time to go back to the old coal mines/stone mill/bakery and start working again. It was a fun weekend, but now I have everything due. Our MCA is due Monday, our abstract is due Monday, our presentation is on Wednesday, and we still haven't fixed our VE. On top of that, I have to keep writing these blogs and it's all so much work. I don't know how I'm going to get anything done. It's so much work and it only took until I had a short weekend to be swamped with work. I think I could still totally handle graduate school. That being said, it's SO much work. We can't fix our stupid pink circle and I don't know what to do. Why is life so complicated? Sorry to bring on negativity, but this is really a lot of work. All because we wanted to celebrate America. I hope we get everything done. Anyways, here's a list of cool colleges to go to and their Pros and Cons.

Columbia

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New York City!!!!• Spider-man goes there in the original trilogy• When you wear a Columbia sports jacket, you can say that you thought it was from your school• Next to Wall Street-ish• Has a C++ programming course(which would be a nice blow off, though I don't think I'd take it)• Pizza• Subways so I don't need a car• Snowy winters• Tall buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everything's expensive• No tacos• I'll stand out since I don't have a northern accent• Crowded as fudge• Times Square• No family

Princeton

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I actually like the orange design• If I wear orange in Oklahoma, people will simply think I'm an OSU fan(which may also be a con)• New Jersey seems like a nice place to live• Between New York and Philadelphia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City is not as cool as others• Small town• Still no family, tacos, or southern accents

MIT

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set in the beautiful countryside of Boston• Every day will feel like an episode of Good Will Hunting• The Boston accent is funny• Cold Boston winters make me warm inside• Lots of Catholicism• America was born there (or something like that)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Really far from home and family• Also expensive• Terrible drivers(but that could mean I'd fit in)• What famous food do they have? New York and Chicago have pizza, Philadelphia has cheesesteak, and I don't know what Boston has• People will get tired of me quoting Good Will Hunting• Having to fight with Harvard people (remember in Good Will Hunting when they got out of the car and beat those guys up? That's how I imagine the cold streets)• When I want an apple, someone (or me) will say "How do you like them apples?"

Berkeley

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• California is a beautiful place to live	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Really hard to spell

- Somewhat close to San Francisco
- Sounds cool
- The program is called Master of Financial Engineering and not something else really weird
- Good placement rates
- Can solve the California housing crisis
- Not as much traffic
- Perfect weather
- Closer to some of my family members
- Not as much public transportation
- Housing is a disaster in the whole state
- Also not that cool of a city

UCLA

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still in California • Pretty close to some family • Hollywood Walk of Fame • Lots of tacos • Technically, it has a subway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing is rarer than money in Oklahoma’s education budget • I never liked LA that much. I was born in Orange County, but I never felt much of a connection

Stanford

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California • Somewhat close to San Francisco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’m pretty sure people will think I pronounce Palo Alto incorrectly • Being asked if I participated in the prison experiments • People asking if I meant Stamford • I hear their band once. No

Posted in Uncategorized | 3 Replies

Day 32-36: I love America (even if it doesn’t always like me)

6

Posted on July 6, 2017 by avelasco

Friday was exciting because we were going to have a long weekend!!! In other words, Friday wasn’t exciting. I just worked on my zombie game, blogged, worked on research, etc. Also, I don’t even know where people went. Seriously it was dead after lunch and I don’t know why.

For fun, I did play Settlers of Catan, which I found out was a very fun game. I liked it, even if the dice defy the laws of probability and don’t roll in correspondence with the expected frequencies. You know what, next time, I’m recording the dice rolls and doing a Chi-Squared test because they’re more loaded than I will be in 20-30 years.

Saturday, I got kidnapped. I thought we were going to the Ames farmer’s market, but we actually went to the Des Moines farmer’s market! I guess that’s what happens when you don’t pay attention. It was a pretty cool farmers market and I even found real tacos!!! It was a fun time and I’m glad that I went.



Turkey bottle holder



You probably aren’t aware with the Hmong people. They are in ethnic group in East Asia. Fun fact: my girlfriend is part of that ethnic group. Being the good and culturally aware person that I am, I decided to ask her if there’s exists such a thing called “Hmong egg rolls.” She told me that they do exist, so if you ever see a sign like this again, they could be legit.



I'm not sure if this is true. I'll have to call in an expert.



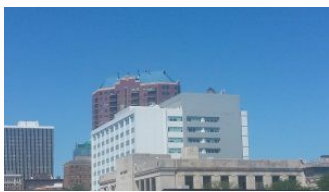
Can anyone tell me if these are authentic Ghanaian baskets? I can't tell



There's nothing that can describe the feeling you get when you finally get to see authentic tacos. The smell of greasy food and sweaty cooks. The slight sour taste of lime that's poured over a corn tortilla. The flavorful taste of having raw onions in every bite. Also, when I saw radishes, I knew that I was back home. The only thing that would have made everything perfect would be a Mandarin Jarrito. Gosh! One thing I miss about the south is constant access to Mexican food. I know what I'm getting when I go back home



Philadelphia's Independence Hall is a beautiful building. Unfortunately (unlike some people), I'm not from Philadelphia, so here's Des Moines's courthouse



Fun fact: someone pointed out that the color of this roof is close to the sky's color. Actually, it's not fun that someone said that. It's fun because of the roof color.





The Arkansas River is very important to the economies of Oklahoma and other states. It runs through the heart of Tulsa on the west. Part of that is true and even though I don't have a picture, you can enjoy this picture of a Des Moines river since most of the information probably still applies.



Des Moines police department



Fun fact: Harry Houdini used to train for diving in New York's winter river by sitting in ice baths. Another fun fact: I feel that not turning on the hot water in my shower will also do the same thing



*Me: Are ya'll really for this?\n Audience: *Cheers*\n Me: Good, THEN SHUT UP!!!!\n *Beat starts*\n *Beat stops* \n *Beat starts up again* \n Me: When I say shut it, do it, cause I can't take it\n Cause I'm too big and and I'm too sick to deal with ya'll when I'm so agitated\n And I hate it but I play it so well. No, not masquerading\n I say it again again non-contemplated so much even my mind think's I'm exaggerated. \n Any beat I slay it I lay it to it's death bed it's well said I fill any beat with a load full of lead\n*



Des Moines City Hall (I think. No one told me)

After I came back, I had to prepare. You probably don't know this, but I have a girlfriend who I love very much. The thing that sucks about going away for a summer is being away from the people you love the most. This includes your parents, siblings, friends, and partners. The good news is that I didn't have any friends, so it was easier to part. Anyways, she came over to visit for the extended weekend and I couldn't be happier about it. Anyways, for our first night in Ames, we went to this little restaurant called Aunt Maude's and it was delicious. It was a little expensive, but it's worth it when you get to celebrate a rare occasion. Unfortunately, the buses don't run very late, so we had to walk back, which was nice because it meant that we had time to talk.





Shrimp (prociutta?) It was actually good and I'm proud of myself for trying it. Normally, I'd say no to anything that looks this "disgusting"



I'm pretty sure she ordered chicken



In America, very few things can beat having a burger and fries



UPDATE ON THE LETTER THAT I NEVER GOT AND MADE ME DOUBT THE US POSTAL SYSTEM, MY LIFE, AND THE UNIVERSE: I got it! I finally got it. I've waited a month to get my letter and I finally got it. I'm so happy and I finally got my letter

Sunday, we woke up for a little double date with my girlfriend's niece and her boyfriend (who actually goes to ISU). We went to Hickory Park (which you should remember as the restaurant who catered our picnic) and had a nice time eating BBQ sandwiches.



*This menu is HUGE!!! If you look closely,
it's wider than me*



Nice picture of us together



Turkey sandwich

Afterwards, we went bowling where I totally dominated the competition. It probably helped that I didn't have a BROKEN ARM LIKE LAST TIME!! Anyways, I totally won even though I can't bowl and I don't know if I'm doing it correctly. Overall, I had a fun time.



*Call me Babe Ruth because I am all about
those strikes*

Later, we had to have pizza. PSA: pizza on a first date is the best first date idea ever. It's delicious, fun, and it lets you easily filter out people you don't want to ever date. Never date anyone who doesn't eat pizza. Also, don't date people who want broccoli on their pizza. I'm thinking about banning it when I'm president. Anyways, the romantic dinner was a nice way to end our night.



*LPT: don't get honey mustard on cheese
bread. It taste good on sandwiches and
that's about it. BBQ is good, however*



Sorry, haters. I think pineapple on pizzas is good

Everybody knows that I'm an excellent chef, but many don't know that my girlfriend also likes to cook. Being the romantic type, I decided to make her some homemade tacos. Unfortunately, when we got to the store, they didn't have any shells, so I had to make the good kind. These are actually the first tacos I've made with all of the proper ingredients. Usually, my mom uses only meat and tortillas, so I'm glad I went all out and got cilantro and onions. It was a tough battle, I cut my finger off (so long to being able point at stuff), but it was worth it when I saw the results.



On my way back with my taco supplies



This isn't the first time I've seen a Mexican cooking tacos in my kitchen (thanks, Mom)



They look beautiful





Nice little Jarritos. I love this drink and I grew up on it. If I'm not getting Coke in a Mexican restaurant, I'm getting this. Also, guess which one is mine.

We saw fireworks for a little bit (we spent most of our time watching The Magicians. Read the art caption for more information). Sorry we didn't get a picture, but we decided that spending time watching Netflix was more important. Some people say that going to the movie theater on a first date are terrible and I agree. You can't see each other, you don't interact with the other person, and it's a huge waste of money that doesn't make you that happy. That being said, movies after a few dates are very nice, provided that you watch them at home.

- You can actually talk to the person
- You can wear more comfortable clothes
- The food is cheaper and better
- You can have subtitles (rant here: I really wish movies had subtitles when you go to a theater. Other countries have subtitles, so why don't we? Sometimes, you can't hear what's being said and I really wish there was a way to check what they said. The only bad thing is that the timing can be off and sometimes ruins jokes on comedy shows, but I still find them to be very helpful. Anyways, have subtitles in your movies, AMC)
- You can pause the movie whenever you dang well please (which is very convenient when you need to go to the bathroom and don't want to miss the movie because something important will happen (which to me, is all of the movie when I watch it for the first time) and missing it means you have to ask the person with you and take them away from watching the movie.)
- Other people won't be noisy and talk throughout the movie
- The seats and floor aren't sticky
- You can pull out your phone whenever you want to look up actors or if there's an after credits sequence



I'll go ahead and explained the art I bought from the Des Moines Art Festival. My first purchase was these three photos (print? I'm not an artist, so they all look like paintings to me) because they look like possible homes where my girlfriend and I could live. The first one I chose because it's in a forest and I think that living in a forest would be nice. Trees make everything look nice. Fun fact: there are two versions of that painting; the other had giraffes instead of trees. The second painting was chosen because the glass keeps the home protected from nature. We'd never have to worry about lightning strikes ever again. Also, no tornadoes will destroy our home(even though you're not supposed to be next to

windows in a real
tornado). The third
picture was chosen
because it's in a city
and we plan to live in a
city. Also, there's a river
and living next to a river
is nice.



This picture is very
important. When my
girlfriend and I went to
New York, we had to
take a bus because my
mom wouldn't let me
drive that far. I don't
know you ya'll know
this, but taking buses
sucks. Don't do it
unless you have to.
Even driving is better.
Anyways, because it's
so boring, we decided
to save some Netflix
shows and movies. She
saved The Magicians
on her phone and we
watched two episodes
together, which made
the trip just slightly
more bearable. We
liked it and had to finish
a few more episodes.
Plus, the main
character lives in New
York and was going on
an interview with
Columbia, which would
be a nice place to go.
They have a Financial
Engineering program,
plus it's close to Wall
Street. Columbia would
be perfect

Tuesday was a sad day for me because I had to say goodbye to the woman of my dreams. Not forever, but it felt like it. I don't know if anyone else could make me as happy as she can. I don't know, maybe a cook at a pizzeria can compete, but that's about it. Anyways, I had to say goodbye to my sweet angel and live out my life without her. I had pancakes, but they couldn't fill the hole in my heart. Neither could the game of Settlers of Catan I played that morning. Even the gym wasn't open for me to work out my frustrations. I did buy more meat so I could make tacos, so hopefully cooking for others will make me happy. I didn't really do much that day. Just watched The Mindy Project and make my own doubly linked list to put on GitHub. Hopefully, things like this will get me hired (it may also hurt me if companies determine I have bad programming skills, so I'm going to hope this works out). Sorry, America. I didn't enjoy your birthday, but at least I had a fun time yesterday. Apparently, my family at home didn't celebrate either. Too much work and I wasn't there. I guess no one was happy.

Posted in Uncategorized | 6 Replies

Day 30 and 31: Spray tan clothes



Posted on July 3, 2017 by avelasco

Wednesday, I worked on my zombie game. It's looking better and it even has music. I still haven't been able to get VR to work on it (the controllers haven't been working and we can't figure out why). Developing for VR sucks. I just wish that everything would work, but it doesn't. Also, I keep getting errors and I don't know why they're there. I followed this tutorial and it seems to work, but then why am I getting errors if it works? I don't know and I'm (temporarily) giving up. I'm going to make sure that the other mechanics work and I'll use a keyboard for input. Anyways, my game is looking cool and my only regret is I don't get to work with a partner anymore. I normally hate school group projects because it always means I get a failing grade since someone was too lazy to pick up the slack, but it's fine here since there is no grade. Also, I actually know the partner (rather than be stuck with some random person in class).

Thursday, we had someone who told us that she was using scanners to get custom clothing fitted onto people, which sounds pretty cool. I hate buying shoes because all companies decide that they're special and that they can use their own units of measurements. Seriously, what do the number mean? It's like every company decided to make their own custom units of measurement and I never know what they mean. Also, some people became uncomfortable with being scanned, which I'm sure was pretty annoying for the researchers. Can you imagine bringing people in, only to have them quit?

Also, my team worked on the environments, the abstract, and our methods section. It's getting pretty busy this week and 'm scared we won't finish. I hope that the power of magic will get us through, plus my team works hard on stuff like this. We'll probably finish.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 29: Fake taco tuesday

2

Posted on June 28, 2017 by avelasco

I just worked on our environment for our experiment. It looks cool. We have grass, random outdoorsy stuff, and mountains. No offense, but my mountains look cool. They're huge and purple and the embodiment of what every mountain should strive to be. All I know is that this terrain is going to be perfect for our experiment. The main problem I'm having is the scale. When I run the scene on my computer, it looks fine. When I run the scene on the Vive, everything was really BIG. I tried to fix it, but everything became small. I just wish that the scale would stay consistent so I wouldn't have to keep rebuilding my scene and moving back and forth between the computers. Ugh, 3-D development can be a huge pain in the butt.

For our luncheon, we had a psychology professor come in and explain to us a little about optical illusions. Essentially, our brain expects one thing to happen, but something else happened instead. Also, the back of your brain handles vision, so hitting the back of the head could lead to blindness. Anyways, let's talk talk-o's.

For lunch, we had HyVee tacos and I'm going to start talking about tacos. I only eat Mexican(or somewhat close) tacos. A real taco has meat and a corn tortilla. It's simple, minimalist, and beautiful. Sauces, cilantro, onions, etc. are just icing on the cake. Some people say they are necessary, but good tacos are fine without them. NO TACO SHOULD EVER INCLUDE A SHELL! I have never seen a shell taco in Mexico and I will never eat one. The thing that sucks about living in America is I can never tell what type of taco I will eat when people say taco. Multicultural problems, I guess. Anyways, you can probably tell at this point that I didn't really eat the tacos. I guess I can't complain since they were free, but I didn't eat them. I just ate a crap-ton of lettuce, tortilla chips, and BBQ chips(yes, again). Fun fact: tortilla chips are pretty much appetizers at Mexican restaurants, so I essentially feasted on the food you eat before you eat real food. What's funny is that someone said that she was disappointed in trying her first tacos until I told her that they weren't real tacos. I was actually thinking of making my own tacos for everyone to try. No offense to non-southern states, but y'all are really lacking when it comes to authentic Mexican food. It's going to be something I really miss when I move away from Oklahoma. You know, there's this taco place that's only five minutes away from my house and it has the best tacos ever! I don't know what I'll do when I move to the east coast. Also, sorry for the lack of pictures, but I think you can forgive me if you consider the sensitive subject matter. One last thing, and I'm sorry for getting political, but tacos shouldn't use flour tortillas. *Mic drop*

After work, we had a movie night. We all had a great time watching Moana. The only thing that confused me is I wasn't sure of the culture of the culture that was being represented. I heard the characters are Polynesian, but many elements were obviously derived from Hawaiian culture. I looked it and found out Hawaiians are Polynesians, so great job Disney. You made me learn about other cultures. I really wish that we had bothered to eat popcorn, but no one had any. This movie night was not at all like a normal movie night. We were all talking and commenting throughout the entire movie and I prefer that sometimes. It really depends on how closely you want to pay attention to the movie and how funny the people around you are. Plus, no offense, but I am hilarious (sometimes). Anyways, the movie was okay, but the memories of hanging out with friends will always be with me. The night didn't last long after that. It was already late and only a few of us stuck around to play Get-The-Volleyball-Away-From-My-Roommate-Who-Can-Cheat-Because-His-Arms-Are-So-Long-That-Nobody-Can-Reach-The-Ball-When-He-Holds-It-Over-His-Head. It was fun, may were betrayed, and it ended up in a bloodbath that I would be glad to be a part of again. 10/10 night.

Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

Day 27 and 28: Lazy Sunday and VR Monday

Posted on June 28, 2017 by avelasco

Sunday, I didn't do much.

Monday, I had to go back to my zombie game and make sure I could grab stuff in VR. It took a while, but eventually, we were able to grab stuff. Anyways, we also tried to make our zombie game work in VR. You can run around, but you can't shoot the zombies. I doubt we'll work on this for much longer since everyone in our group needs to work on something together and we're also supposed to be working on the C6 next time. I also went to a talk about how to apply to graduate school. It taught me a little more about applying to graduate school and I learned that I'm doing a lot of things write. The only thing that worries me is the bad essays are a huge mistake and I'm not great at writing(have you been reading these blogs? My punctuation is awful). Also, not all professors are willing to take students, and thus preventing you from studying at that school.The only thing that sucked is that it was during lunch and they didn't give out any food, so I guess I was supposed to starve to death. Whatever, I usually eat too much anyways. I actually ate some BBQ chips when I came back to VRAC. It wasn't a very crappy lunch, but it's probably better than no lunch. Also, I ate spaghetti later and it was good, except for the fact that my meat turned into a solid chunk of ice. Oh well.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 26: Back in Des Moines

Posted on June 28, 2017 by avelasco

Today, we went to the art festival in Des Moines. It was pretty cool and I got to see lots of nice art. I also got to eat a cheesecake covered in chocolate. I know that there was a god of wine, which gave me an idea. If I made a religion and it had several gods in it, there would definitely be a god of cheesecake. I don't know why cheesecake is so good, but I am glad that exists. Anyways, I got some paintings but I didn't get this one that I wanted. It made me really sad, but at least I got a couple of cool pictures out of it.



Glass thingy



I don't know what this is either



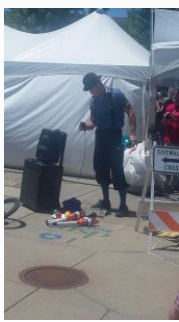
Salt and pepper shakers



Julius Caesar, I think



Washington, Square, or Microsoft's logo. I can't remember.

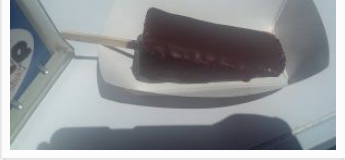


An entertainer (and molester)



Who names a street Walnut? This is hilarious

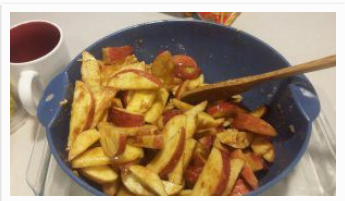




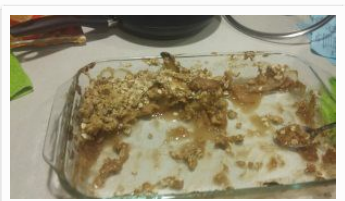
Cheesecake is delightful



When I got back, I went to the gym, took a shower, then finally made my first apple crumble. First of all, it takes way too long to cut up the apples. Seriously, why does it take so long to cut some apples? I don't know why, but the apple mix (I think that's what it's called) smelled delicious! I couldn't take my face away from it because of the smell. Eventually, I had to bake the pie and it took forever. I asked if doubling the amount of ingredients doubles the cooking time. People said no, but I guess I proved them wrong when we saw that it took longer than the recipe said it would take. Everyone said that they LOVED that apple crumble. In fact, I have a new plan; instead of losing weight, I'll make food so often that everyone gains weight and I look more fit in comparison. I guess I cook so often because of all the positive attention that I get. It makes me feel good to know that I can bribe people with food. Then again, don't we all bribe people to like us? Some of us use our personalities, some use our sense of humor, some use interesting stories, and I use food. Anyways, everyone had a great time hanging out. The food definitely made today better.



It smelled delicious. It was like cocaine because I couldn't take my face away from it



Apple crumble so delicious that I had to take a picture after eating most of it

Posted in Uncategorized | [Leave a reply](#)

Day 25: First day of Deeper Dives



Posted on June 26, 2017 by avelasco

Today, I learned about VR games. We actually started by trying to make a first-person shooter game. I made a zombie shooter, or at least tried to do it. All the zombies simply go towards the center of the map and spin around in a tornado. I don't really know what's wrong with my game. It reminds me of Goat Simulator because of the absurdness of everything. At least you can move around and shoot them. This game is going to be awesome and I know it. I really I knew how to at least get the game to work in VR because it's important to our research and the deeper dive. Don't worry, I'll make a link to our game when we're done, unless we're never done. It may just be one of the unfinished projects that will be forgotten forever. I don't think it'll do that because I'm optimistic. I didn't do much after that. Some people went to a concert, but I didn't go because we'd have to wake up early the next day and I didn't really know

anything about the band.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 24: Long Cookout(No, not the good kind)



Posted on June 25, 2017 by avelasco

Work consisted of reading my articles today. Anyways, let's talk about fun stuff. Today, our luncheon was given by a professor who specializes in bio fuels. He talked about really exciting stuff, such as having vacuums that suck up CO2. He even showed us a graph that says that in the future, we could have negative CO2 emission rates. The future is exciting because of all of the new things that we're going to have. One day, I'm going to be president and clean up the entire Earth. Here's a list of things I'll accomplish.

1. You're going to be able to clean the fresh air that comes out of car exhaust pipes.
2. You'll be able to make spaghetti with the water that you get from a lake.
3. Tress will be planted on every city.
4. Also, the temperature will go back to normal, which is good because Oklahoma summers are getting unbearable.
5. You'll be able to see the moon again(I'm looking at you, California and China).
6. The stars will be visible
7. Electric cars will be green since their energy comes from renewable resources

It just sounded so cool to have another source of fuel, especially when gas is non-renewable. He even told us that some scientists are developing gas made from algae and chemicals. I just liked the entire talk. It was interesting and it gave me a little hope for the future.

For lunch, we had HyVee spaghetti. I was scared it was going to be better than mine, but I'm pretty sure my spaghetti is the second best(right after my mom's). You may be asking yourself "Alfredo, are you really so insecure that you were willing to stop cooking spaghetti just because a store made a better version?" To answer that question, I'll say that I don't think so.

After work, I went to a cookout, except it had a really LOOOOOOOOOOONG line. There were a million people and only one person cooking. I guess they really underestimated the rate of people coming to get free food. I can't really complain since it was free, but I sometimes wonder how far I'll go for free food. I didn't even get a hamburger. I had to settle for a hot dog because I didn't want to wait for a whole line of food. At least they had BBQ. Seriously, I love BBQ sauce!!! I never noticed how much I love BBQ until I moved out of the south. I also played games with my group. If it wasn't for the wait, it would be a great night.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 23: We chose our deeper dives



Posted on June 23, 2017 by avelasco

Today, we learned more about Unity and we had to make light switches. We also had to put a photo and button in for user interaction. However, I left a little early because I decided to go to a psychology talk. She said that if you give people buttons, the top one means to move right. Honestly, I couldn't concentrate. The good news is that they served pizza! It was Papa John's, but I still like to eat it. I just wish I had pineapples on it. Pineapples go great on pizza! I also ate lunch at UDCC, but it wasn't as much food as normal since I already ate at that point. When we got back, we had to put a picture in our Unity script and put buttons to make a ball move around. Not much happened.

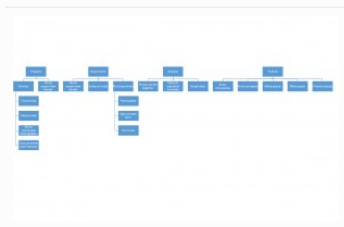
Yes, I did make sure to read my article for my research stuff.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

HCI Project Analysis



Posted on June 22, 2017 by avelasco



I did a lot. I wrote down the basic design and made the picture.

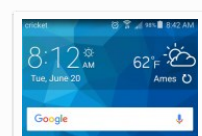
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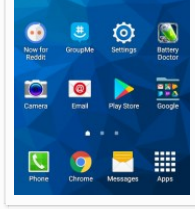
Day 22: How to change your DNA



Posted on June 21, 2017 by avelasco

I thought I woke up late, but it turns out I woke up super early because my phone gave me the wrong time. I actually came to VRAC really early. I don't know why life throws random challenges at me, but I don't like it.





Seriously, what time is it?

Today, I read articles for our research. We had to meet with our mentors and go over the paper, plus we discussed even more of our experiment and the details. We were even told that we could start designing our virtual environment. Unfortunately, I have to use GitHub and I still don't know how to use it. It's very confusing. Hopefully, I'll figure everything out before it's too late.

For our luncheon, we had someone come in who studies how real world effects can permanently change our DNA and how we develop. Basically, stress kills you. Also, Romanian orphans can not stand on one foot because they were tied to chairs when they were young([this is the dictator that did this](#)). It was a little confusing and I'm not still not sure why she was using saliva when she admitted that it wildly varies for no reason, but I'm pretty sure that I learned something today. The good news was that we got Jeff's Pizza and it's delicious. Pizza is a gift to humanity and nothing could ever live up to its legacy.

After work I went to the gym, but I lost my bike lock. When I arrived, I told my brain to make sure I didn't lock the other bike, but to make sure my bike got locked. When I got out of the gym, my lock was cut. Turns out, my brain locked the other person's bike and missed my bike completely. How did I even do that? Every scientist thinks that brains are the most amazing piece of engineering in the world, but stuff like this makes me really skeptical. After working out, I had to do more exercise as I biked to get a new lock. I made it twenty minutes before the store closed and got a new lock. I also stopped at HyVee's to get some protein, energy, or granola bars(Wikipedia won't tell me). Today sucked and I hate my brain. At least I got home.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 21: Unity's linear algebra simulator 3000?

2

Posted on June 20, 2017 by avelasco

Today, we had to learn Unity. I didn't think it would be hard since I have already used it before, and it wasn't. I made a cool version of the roll-a-ball game. I essentially turned it into a linear algebra simulator. I'm so proud of it that I made a GitHub account just so I could share it with everybody. Yeah, I know, "How can you call yourself a real programmer if you don't even have a GitHub account?" ~~My excuse~~The reason is that I just didn't know the purpose of it. I'm still not sure what it does exactly. I heard you put your code there and companies look at it and determine if you're a good programmer, so you would guess I should put some of my old projects in there, but I'm also not sure if my professors would be happy with the idea of me putting my answers to their problems online. It's funny how schools teach you all of this knowledge and miss huge gaps like creating a GitHub account. I mean, do I put my GitHub account on my resume? I really wish I had someone to tell me things like this. Maybe one day, I'll find someone to tell me what I need to know or I'll crash and burn and figure it out all on my own. BTW, it's called a linear algebra simulator because it looks like this picture. [Linear algebra pic](#)

Anyways, enough about how I'm realizing how tough life it. Here's the link: [Fun Game!!!](#)

Don't worry, the game was so I could understand Unity more because we're probably going to need it for our research. It's probably how we'll set up our experiment. In fact, one of my team members actually found out how to make VR work with Unity. Also, I read an article that we'll discuss tomorrow.

After work, I went to the gym and worked on my arms. I'm gonna look like Arnold Schwarzenegger soon. I didn't really do much, so I'll end my blog here.

Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

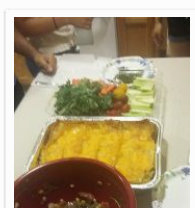
Day 20: lasagna

Posted on June 19, 2017 by avelasco

Guess who got their bike fixed? Freddy Mercury? Lance Armstrong? Chef Ramsay? I don't know about them, but I got my bike fixed. Now, I can do whatever I want, whenever I want, however I want, whoever I want, whichever I want. Honestly, I'll probably go to work, the gym, home, and Walmart. I decided to repay my debt by helping and changing a tire. I did well and only had to ask for help once.

Eventually, I had to return for an assignment; I had to find an article to discuss for our research. I found one, but had to take an inter-library loan, so I found another one instead. I think it'll be perfect for our research. Even our project mentor said the articles our team found look great.

I did a whole bunch of nothing for the day until I went to the gym. I found out that I can do a pull up if I weight 110 lbs. Hopefully, I'll be able to do a pull up with my entire body weight by the end of the summer. I also got to try lasagna for the first time and it was good. I mean, something told me not to eat it, but I did and I'm glad I got to try it. Also, I cannot believe that nobody made a Garfield joke during the gathering! Seriously, I it was on my mind the whole time. Good news; I got my spaghetti sauce that I thought I lost yesterday.





Delicious lasagna



Back in my arms again

Anyways, I went home soon after since everyone was going to watch the new Wonder Woman movie. I'm not really a DC fan and I wasn't excited for this movie like everybody else. Plus, I needed sleep since I wasn't getting enough during the week. I called my dad(because it's father's day) and my girlfriend before I finally went to sleep.

Posted in Uncategorized | [Leave a reply](#)

Day 19: Farmer's market

2

Posted on June 19, 2017 by avelasco

Despite staying up last night, I managed to wake myself up for the farmer's market to look for some apples. How did they not have any apples? Seriously, there were all of these vegetables, but not any fruits. I guess I don't understand farmers markets. At least I got these sweet tacos that were somewhat authentic. I mean, they used a tortilla instead of a shell and they used two tortillas, but I don't see tomatoes on tacos. Whatever, I miss tacos. Before we left, we went to the music store and played around with the instruments.



Statue of someone



Dovahkiin statue

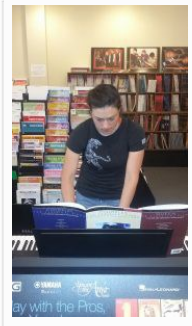


*My delicious and somewhat authentic tacos.
I wish I could remember the name of the
taco truck that sold them.*





That's right ladies. Who wants to date a six-foot tall man? I'm making this my Tinder profile picture. Source: probably me



You know what they say; be a creep to your talented friends every chance you get and always take their pictures without consent. It's just a good habit. Fun fact; I'm somewhat sure she still doesn't know.

Immediately after getting back, I check the mail center for my letter. It wasn't there.

Soon after, I had to go to Walmart and get some groceries because I was starving and running out of food, and I didn't know how much longer I can last(sorry if I sound like Bear Grylls while writing that). Plus, I had to get some apples since a certain farmers market, which I won't name because I'm really nice, didn't have any. The good news is that a nice lady, who had apparently been making apple crumbles for twenty years, told me what to buy. Whether it's mom, my girlfriend, or a random lady in Walmart, it's nice to know that someone in my life will always tell me what to buy. I bought way too many items and almost broke my arms trying to carry my items back. All of us may have bought too many items, but we made it. Also, our bus drive came from Canada, moved to Texas, then moved to Ames. He was pretty cool.

It wasn't long before we had a cookout! We ate burgers, played Frisbee catch, and played Fibbage (where I won again because I'm a genius). We all had a great day again and I'm not sure how many good days we can have. Do good days run out? I sure hope that they don't.

Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

Day 18: Late Night Walmart trip



Posted on June 19, 2017 by avelasco

I woke up late today. I know and I'm sorry, but I got really tired yesterday. Making spaghetti is not easy at all. Don't worry, I still got to work on time. I don't show up late. Also, I'm getting better at Solidworks. I still think that Maya is better, but it's good to know that I'm building stuff. I'm understanding all of the constraints and how to define everything. You know what, I'm going to be a mechanical engineer! I'm kidding, I'm going to stay with programming.

For lunch, we went to the other building. I had Chester's Chicken (sorry, but it's delicious and I don't have one around me). We also had a discussion about all of the way to make chicken and I found out it's really difficult to list them all. I don't know how to make chicken because of all the ways, but I'll cross that bridge when I see it.

Game night was really fun tonight. We played Fibbage all night (and I won a few rounds). I had lots of fun with everybody. Eventually, the few of us who were still awake went to Walmart. I was starting to wonder what I was doing with my life since I should have been sleeping because I had to go to the farmer's market, but then I thought it was getting better along with everybody, so I'll take it as a win. Fun fact: the Walmart near Aldi's has a McDonald's in it!





Fun fact: this Walmart has a McDonald's in it! I haven't seen one in years because all McDonald's have been replaced by Subway. As you can see, Emma was just as excited as me.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 17: Revenge of the Spaghetti

5

Posted on June 19, 2017 by avelasco

I went to work early today after buying some pens(I lost my first one after light painting) and read lots of papers needed for research. Eventually, we had a luncheon with MY professor. Also, it was held in the same room where we usually meet him, so it was like home. He talked about his earlier experience in VR and told us about how early VR headsets used to cost \$40,000! The tracking system would also cost \$10,000-20,000! He's really happy since VR technology is cheaper and more available. He's actually able to buy back-up headsets because they're \$800.00 today. I really like working with my project mentors. They're nice and super chill about the project. Don't worry, we'll get the project done (just because they're chill doesn't mean they're lazy).

For lunch, I had a salad. It's nothing to impressive and I really wanted Caesar salad, but it was a good lunch. I even got to eat bread sticks. I also called to see if I could find my letter, but that won't work since letters don't have tracking numbers. My mentor told me it's normal to wait a week for letters, but I still wish that I at least knew where it was. It's been ten days and I wish I didn't have to wait so long. Fun fact: US postal service was really bad until companies like FedEx and UPS were allowed to make money off the the service, which shows that you can't always trust the government to do everything. I'll just have to pray that life comes through for me.

Anyways, we met up with my project mentors to discuss our research and we're getting close to writing our experiment. I'm really proud of the work that my team is putting in and the results that we are getting out. Also, we're getting better at SolidWorks. I'm getting better, even though some of the instructions don't make sense and don't always explain enough. Our instructor even saw people working on it and he went around and helped everybody with the tutorial. He even said that it's okay if we only finish part of the first tutorial because we'll learn a lot anyways (plus, there wasn't really enough time to do everything in one day, unless you could install the software at home and have a PC strong enough to run SolidWorks). We stayed a little after work, but we eventually had to go rock climbing.

I'm going to tell you that rock climbing is hard, but really fun. My shoulders were feeling it, my fingers were crying, and I wanted to give up, so I did. However, I went to the wall that didn't have any ropes and I climbed one of the paths, so I can say that I accomplished something today.

Later, I made spaghetti for EVERYONE! You may not know this, but I love spaghetti. Spaghetti is a delicious delicacy that reminds me why we're alive and still living. I had some help in the kitchen and was able to make beautiful bowls for everyone who came over and they watched The Eric Andre Show. Side note, I eventually showed my roommate the Oklahoma state song, and he agreed that it was a good state song which proves my point that Oklahoma has (one of) the best state song in America.



A beautiful bowl. I'll be happier holding it than I will be holding my son.

Posted in Uncategorized | 5 Replies

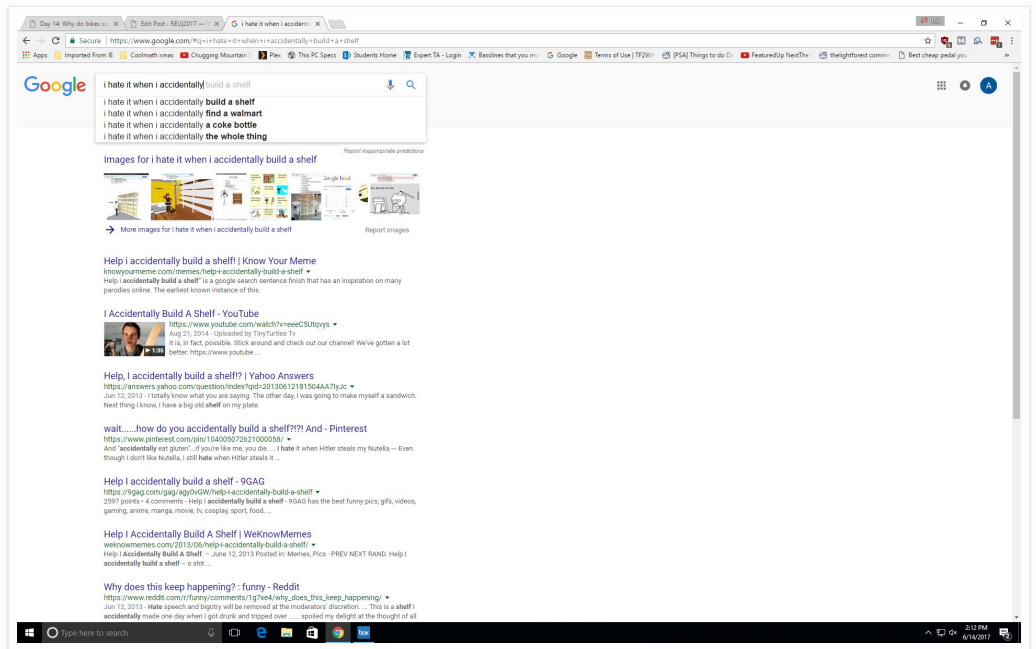
Day 16: Seriously? Where's my letter?

Posted on June 15, 2017 by avelasco

I like rain. I really do. Rain is one of the reasons I wanted to move to the coast. One of my favorite Pixar shorts is called *The Blue Umbrella* and it's about these umbrellas in the rain on a busy street. I thought it was set in New York, but I found out it's actually a fictional city that's also based off Paris, San Francisco, and Chicago(Wikipedia, 2017). It just looks really pretty and it made me wish I got to see a city in the rain(I did, however, see New York with snow). Plus, I like the music. As you can tell by the fact that I wrote a whole paragraph on rain, I like rain. That being said, why did it have to rain today?

When we got our emails, we were told to bring an umbrella, but I didn't believe them. It was nice weather everyday, so I thought "Psh, I don't need an umbrella." It's nice to see my confidence failed me today. I'm not going to go ahead and say that this is the worst rainstorm that I've ever seen (after all, I am from Oklahoma where we get pretty bad storms). That being said, it wasn't fun to get soaked. It's all because I didn't get to the bus a few minutes earlier since I was trying to see how I could check for my letter. Anyways, we did more Maya stuff. I made my future apartment(it was supposed to be a generic skyscraper, then The Twin Towers, then The Trump Tower, then The Empire State Building, then I gave up and made it my apartment). I don't know why, but I'm ready to give up my comfy home in Oklahoma for a small apartment. I guess that when I'm with my girl, I'm okay. Anyways, we also started to learn SolidWorks and we didn't really get to use it. We mostly learned about constraints and defining everything. I was pretty confused, but I think I'll understand everything tomorrow. Somewhat serious rant, I don't know where my letter is. My girlfriend sent it to me a week

ago and I seriously where to where it is. Seriously, why can't I my letter? Everyone else gets their letter, so why can't I? I don't know, I've just been waiting forever and I really hope that I get my letter. I'm just going to pray that I get my letter.



Here's some humor based off of something someone else said. I will forever remember this.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

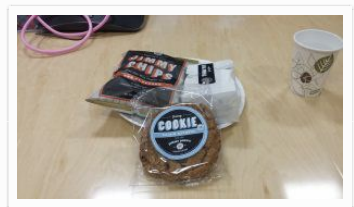
Day 15: Recreating the human heart

4

Posted on June 14, 2017 by avelasco

Today, I read the paper that my mentors told me to read and did an annotated bibliography. I'm glad that I was able to get through so much material! I think I'm getting the hang of reading papers.

Anyways, we had a luncheon where a professor discussed his research of making SolidWorks not suck as much. What happens is that SolidWorks doesn't always take advantage of your GPU (which is pretty much a mini supercomputer) and relies on your CPU, which is slow at graphics. He his algorithms to model the hearts of patients with heart arrhythmia(I think that's what it is. He said that both sides of the heart beat at different times) and he had these fancy simulations. I don't have any pictures since I don't have the slideshow, but you can trust me when I said they look cool.

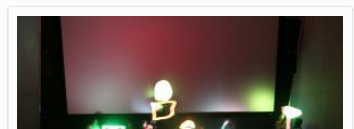


First time eating Jimmy John's. Their commercials are funny and don't make sense, so at lease I got the chance to try it out.

If you look closely, you can see a bag of BBQ chips. I don't know about you, but BBQ is gooooooood. Seriously, I really like the BBQ chips that I had for lunch. It makes me sad because I don't have anymore, but maybe one day I can go get some more. There's a Jimmy John's on the same street as my campus.



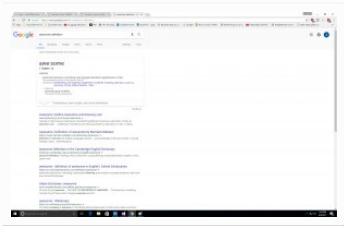
After work, we got to do light painting, which you'll see below. The room was dark and I felt that I didn't have my balance. I could have sworn that the stairs were tilted, but someone said the darkness messes with your vestibular(thank my research that I learned that word) senses.





Mario landscape

I went to the gym(by walking because my bike is broken) and when I came back, my letter was missing?!?! Seriously, where's my letter?! For those who don't know, my girlfriend sent me a letter a week ago and I don't know where it is. She said she put a lot of work into it and I'm scared that I'm not going to get it. Sorry for the depressing stories, so here's a picture that I think is funny.



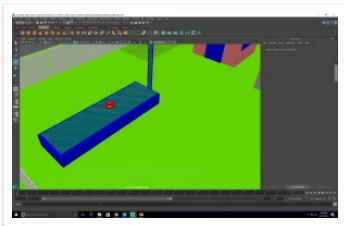
Posted in Uncategorized | 4 Replies

Day 14: Why do bikes suck so much?

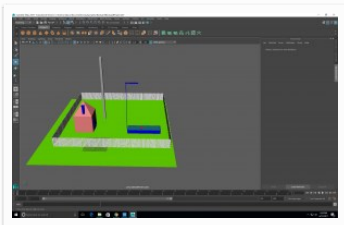
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Posted on June 14, 2017 by avelasco

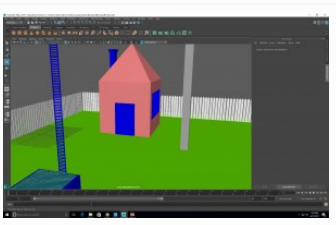
I'm confident now that I can wake up early. I got up early again and it seems that as long as I push myself a little bit, I can wake up with a reasonable time to get ready for work. Anyways, I got to work and we learned how to use Maya, which is 3-D modeling software. We had to make a house with a lawn and stuff. I don't know about everybody else, but I made myself a million dollar mansion.



Got a sweet swimming pool.



You may be asking yourself "Is that diving board 80% of the height of The Washington Monument?" The answer to that is HECK YEAH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



I also had to chance to meet with my graduate adviser and we discussed our research a little more.

After work, I went to the gym and someone told me that I look like I lost weight. I don't know if they mean that (I heard it takes weeks to actually lose weight) or if they were lying to me to make sure I didn't get discouraged, but I'm glad they told me. You know, I'm really liking my time here in Iowa. Everybody is so friendly. I was scared that I wouldn't make any friends, but I see now that it's just an irrational fear. I guess I just have to accept the fact that some people do like me. Anyways, I worked out, then I went home and FUDGE!

My bike chain broke and now I'm sad. Why does everything good in my life always go to crap? Well, I guess I'm out of a bike for this week. I'd be more okay with it, but I don't know the bus schedule anymore because of the detour. Is it still the same? I don't know, I have chain grease all over my hands, and I'm not sure what I'll do now.

Posted in Uncategorized | 1 Reply

Day 12 and 13: Climbing the ropes and baking pancakes



Posted on June 13, 2017 by avelasco

Despite going to sleep late last night, I was one of the first people to get ready for ropes stuff. It was a long drive and we almost got lost, but we finally got there after 45 minutes of driving. We started off by chaining ourselves together and trying to pass a hula hoop around our circle. Then, we tried to get a tire off and on a pole without actually touching the pole. We completed both tasks very quickly. I guess that's why we spend so much time doing activities that don't really seem to do research; teams that are more connected do better. We were also told that the activities make us less homesick, but I now believe that their main purpose is team building.

The next task was to cross a "river" with "blind" people. What pretty much happened was I got blindfolded while I had to balance on beams across a surface. It was boring when I was blindfolded since I had no idea what was actually happening. Luckily, all three of us blind people were able to cross without falling. After that ordeal, we had a chance to go on this rope line where we would be lifted and swung around. The good news is you chose how high to go and you got to let go of the rope, which would dictate when you start swinging. I accidentally let go to early and didn't have a chance to count down, but I was glad that I made it through. After you got over the shock of being suspended in the air, it was a fun swing.



Me in my harness



Swinging rope line

After swinging, we got to eat lunch. It was a sandwich, chips, cookies, and a fruit. I got an apple and turkey sandwich.



This next part was the hard part. The main challenge was to climb a HUGE tower. It doesn't look that big from the ground, but it's nerve wracking when you climb. I waited a little bit before attempting to climb and I failed. If you look at the picture, you'll see a triangular platform at the bottom. I only got up to there before I had enough and decided to come down.



50 foot behemoth

That being said, I felt like a failure. Everybody was climbing the tower and I was stuck at the ground, but I didn't like that. After listening to *Lose Yourself*, I decided to tackle the challenge again. I told myself that I wouldn't quit and I would climb this colossus. I mean, I'm supposed to be the next Wolf of Wall Street (I think, I'm starting to get excited again but I'm not quite sure) and I can't even

get over a fear of heights? I climbed and it was embarrassing. I started yelling when I got to my previous stopping point. I was so scared and I don't know how most people stayed so quiet. It was really scary! I mean, things were shaking and it was windy. I thought Oklahoma was where the wind comes sweeping down the plain, but I'm starting to think that Iowa's getting jealous and trying to beat us. Anyways, I eventually made it all the way up to the top (like how I will when I work at a company). It was also intimidating trying to come down (especially when I was pretty sure my belayer was trying to pull me off). When I finally reached the ground, I was glad that I had pushed myself and did something really uncomfortable. Also, one of the people who ran the event joked that nobody hear me on the ground. I think this experience perfectly represents how I handle certain situations. I will do it. I may be screaming and kicking along the way, but I'll do it.



Swinging the ropes

For day 13, I got hungry and decided to cook pancakes when I noticed a major problem; my milk was going to expire. I didn't account for the fact that I'm not a family and thus bought a gallon of milk. It was two days expired, so I knew it wouldn't last long. I decided to cook pancakes for my roommates, but they had fried chicken and rotisserie chicken and simply couldn't eat the number of pancakes that would be made by me, so I told everyone to come over if they wanted pancakes. Soon after, everybody came over to hang out and have dinner. I made numerous pancakes without burning them. That being said, one pancake was under-cooked. Anyways, I was really glad with how far I've come with cooking. I didn't even know pancake mix and flour were the same thing! I even made a mess in the kitchen from all of my cooking. I treat my kitchen like a dry aquifer; not very well. My roommate's fried chicken was delicious! Thanks Sushi. I had a great time with everybody and I hope everyone enjoyed my cooking.

Posted in Uncategorized | [Leave a reply](#)

Day 11: It's my birthday



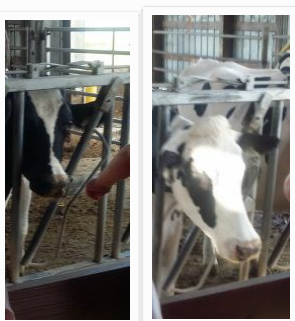
Posted on June 11, 2017 by avelasco

Today, I started reading this 31-page paper that my project mentors sent us. The bad news is that only two pages are citations, but the good news is that the font size is a little big, so it shouldn't take TOO much time to read everything. Plus, it's the only paper I have to read. Also, there are lots of figures, so it's not a full 31 pages I have to read.

To start my day off, I went to the farm. It was mostly full of little kids, but it was still a fun experience to see the cows. The wife of one of the workers was there, which must have been fun for their kid. Fun fact: sand is used instead of hay sometimes because sand is cooler than hay. Another fun fact: the farm composts manure for bedding because hay is expensive (\$100,000.00 worth of hay was used last year). They had doughnuts for visitors and it reminded me of home (If you're ever in Tulsa, go to QuikTrip! It's better than 7/11). They were HyVee brand, but they look exactly like QT. Along the trip, I listened to the Hamilton soundtrack and I'll admit it; Hamilton is pretty cool.



Nice chocolate milk



When I walked into the lab, I was surprised to see that someone had taped a balloon to my chair and that others were drawing a decoration to wish me a happy birthday. Honestly, I'm not sure how anybody knew since I never told them. I guess I have a stalker on my team.



*A little drawing for me.
The design is obviously
a reference to Route
66, which runs in my
city. Fun fact, my high
school and university
both border the famous
street.*



Anyways, we learned about class and objects in c++, which is okay except for the fact that they have have colons to indicate visibility. Colons make me uncomfortable because it's never obvious when they end.

Journal Club was cool. Nobody liked the article and we all agreed that it was too technical for the average reader to comprehend, even if they're working in a technology related field. The whole point of the article is to show us how we shouldn't write a paper and which papers to avoid reading for our literature review. At the end, I got a birthday card and a cake was brought out that we ate after lunch. It was something called "marble" and it meant that it was two types of cake (which is good because I prefer chocolate). Before you ask, I didn't get my head shoved into the cake. I wanted to, but other people have to eat that cake (I guess they don't, but I wanted to be nice). We did eventually eat it and learned c++.



After work, we had celebration for my birthday. Just played games, ate pizza (because you all know I LOVE pizza. I mean, I love my girlfriend, but I LOVE pizza). It was fun and I'm glad it happened. Thank you, everybody who came.

Posted in Uncategorized | [Leave a reply](#)

Day 10: I blur reality and computers

2

Posted on June 11, 2017 by avelasco

Today, I read the papers I had to read for Journal Club and my project mentors. No offense, but some of these papers are super BORING!!!! It's really hard, but I wasn't going to give up, so I read through the papers. At least I won't disappoint my professors! My group also got our problem statement done! No offense, but my group gets stuff done. For lunch, we had a PhD candidate talk to us about videos that look very close to reality. It's pretty much Trompe-l'œil, but with computers instead of painting. It was interesting because the speaker said that her study involves in seeing whether or not people can differentiate between fake photos and real photos. She even told us a story where her husband and someone else were watching a video game and believed that it was an actual football game! Lunch was good and it came from HyVee.



Pretty good lunch



*Unlike regular
lemonade, pink
lemonade is sweet and
delicious!*

The Craft and Research topic was focused on IRB and plagiarism. Fun fact: many people plagiarize, so don't feel to bad if you do it(that being said, don't plagiarize). After that, we had to discuss the t-shirt design and it was difficult to cooperate the opinions of twelve unique individuals

After work, I ran, biked, ate a salad, then went to sleep.



*Albino squirrel. Turns
out, Iowa State has a
few articles on it.*

Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

Day 8: Taking pictures



Posted on June 8, 2017 by avelasco

The good news is that I woke up early today! That means that I'm not tired; I'm just tired in the morning. We learned more about c++. Fun fact: the first assignment that we were given was REALLY hard! We had to error check user input and it's not as easy as in Java. I had to the input as a string and put it in a try-catch statement, but errors could be thrown as strings, ints, or something else. Why are there so many ways to throw errors? At least c++ has the decency to have a built-in method to convert strings to numbers. Also, why doesn't c++ have a length method for arrays? Apparently, you can take the size of the array, but I'm pretty sure a length method would make everything easier. There's probably a reason for everything, but it's not as intuitive as how other languages take care of things. I guess that's the price that you pay for speed. At least the second one was easier; I just had to figure out the Fibonacci sequence.

I implemented a solution that uses dynamic programming ([Here's a link because I can't seem to explain to people what it is](#)). I know, I'm a nerd and I tried WAY too hard for an assignment that's built for beginners, but I don't care. I always try to hard (except when something's too hard).

Coming back from lunch, we had to take pictures with our red polos. It was a little hot, but not too bad. My favorite part was when we tried to take a picture next to the geese and they got super aggressive and territorial with us. Remember kids: geese are like bears with wings. After taking pictures, we learned more c++ and had to read a file. I'm going to tell you now that I HATE taking in files in c++. It took forever (some people didn't even finish) and it took a while until I figured out how to figure out if you've reached the end of the file. At least I got it to work, but I don't know why it's not as intuitive. I think I'm starting to not like c++ because I'm so focused on the way Java does things that I see why c++ would implement their solutions the way they are.

Working out was fine. I did arms and yoga mat exercises. No offense, but planks are hard as fudge! They kill you and your entire essence, but it's worth it when you realize that it'll improve you. I went back home, worked on a little side project, pushed off the urge to eat my salad, then went to sleep. I'm going to be honest, I think I'm alienating my group a little. Everyone already knows that I have difficulty dealing with people and I think I'm starting to have difficulties again. I don't know what I'm doing wrong, I know my personality is a bit pushy, but am I really that bad? I thought we were all joking around. Maybe if I can't keep people from hating me, I can just keep them from hating me for another nine weeks. If that doesn't work, I'll find a way to manage. Many people don't like me and if I can get through that then, I can do it again. Besides, tomorrow's always another day to improve.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 8: First working day



Posted on June 7, 2017 by avelasco

I still got up and was still late, but at least I got to work on time. I am SUPER sleepy and I'm sad that I need so much sleep. Maybe I'll push myself force myself early one day. I wasn't sure if I would get to work on time by going on the bus, so I took my bike. Biking is

still hard, but I am still glad that I'm forcing myself to do it. Anyways, today was a working day, so I just read the journal club article, worked on c++, etc.

We actually had a chance to meet the director of VRAC. His name is James Oliver and he is really cool! He said that he's like me; he didn't know anything about grad school and wished that more people told him all about it. I learned so much about getting a graduate degree. Did you know that being "overqualified" isn't a thing? Many tech companies are willing to hire higher-level graduates. He also told us that most of his PhD students (he's also a professor) have gone off to work industry jobs; only one became a professor. I'm still not sure if I want to go to grad school, but he makes it sound so cool! No offense to my mentors who made it sound scary, but I think it's because I was very uncertain, new, and they wanted to tell us the truth so that there are no surprises. Anyways, he told us all about how you could get a degree and have a great career and I'm not sure what my career will be. I do have some ideas of how everything will play out.

Option 1: Get a bachelor's and become a programmer. Maybe Google is hiring, or maybe Microsoft. All I know is that I would move to the Northeast (unless I find a good reason to move to California). I figured I'd live out a good life, possibly start my own company after getting industry experience. Actually, I'd stay with my company if I get promoted.

Option 2: Get a master's in financial engineering, become The Wolf of Wall Street, and be a multi-millionaire! I would all all of the rich people stuff: wear suits, drive a cool car, have both a Netflix and Hulu account, and now that I think of it, this should totally be a list.

If I had a million dollars

- *Insert Eminem song here*
- *Apparently, The Barenaked Ladies also did a song, so you can also insert the song here*
- Buy a lamborghini
- Buy a mansion (or pay rent for a 500 sq apartment in New York)
- Buy a suit
- Get a Netflix and Hulu account
- Buy a boat (and I don't know what to do with it)
- Buy a supercomputer
- Start a scholarship for minorities like me
- Start a scholarship for everyone
- Get a building named after me
- Build something in Tulsa and get it named after me
- Buy my wife a dress
- Take my wife to Red Lobster (because I'll be fancy as fudge!)
- Bribe Lobby Congress to use solar power
- Fly around in a helicopter to work
- Buy stupid crap for no reason
- Travel the ~~world~~ US
- Travel ~~outside of the~~ US the world
- Order McDonald's stuff that's NOT the dollar menu
- Run a summer music camp for non-college kids
- Pay to see The Beatles live
- Build better subways for cities
- Build a better Hyper loop than Elon Musk
- Join The Avengers

Option 3: Drop out and live a normal life

Option 4: Drop out and become the next Bill Gates and Steve Jobs

After the conversation, we had lunch that almost killed me! It was a pretty good sandwich, but I put on honey mustard that was REALLY spicy. I started coughing on some bites and eventually had to spit out my sandwich. The good news is we had a HUGE cookie to eat.

After lunch, I met with my research mentors and our group has a better idea of what our problem statement is. The rest of the time was spent reading papers. Eventually, I played Gin Rummy. I lost, but I had a good time. I worked out my arms, walked back with some people and that ended my day.

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Day 7: Learning C++

1

Posted on June 5, 2017 by avelasco

I woke up a little later than usual which makes me sad because it might mean I'm getting to the point where I'm not waking up early :(. Then again, I did stay up somewhat late last night, so that may not be the case. Anyways, we learned c++ and it was SUPER BORING!!! Don't worry to anybody reading this and thinking that I'm trashing on the instructor or lesson or anything else. This is a me problem and I'm not really making a serious complaint. The only reason I thought this way is because I'm a computer programming genius going to be a Junior next year whose taken many programming courses, plus another course specifically on programming in different languages. They said that some people may think this course would be easy, but I didn't think it would be me and I think that's kind of cool. To anyone else who is reading this and doesn't quite have my background, you'll do well as long as you keep trying. I believe in you. Anyways, I went to lunch, which was good, and came back to meet with my project and grad mentor. We just went over a paper and they even played a game where you're stuck on a desert island and it looks like Myst (I can't remember what it's called and I hate myself for it). After that, my group went back for more c++. It was still easy, so I did my annotated bibliography for a paper tomorrow and worked on this blog. I'm impressed that everyone already did their blog. I wish I did have time to work on it after lunch, but I wouldn't have finished anyways.

After work, I worked on my arms since they weren't as sore (so expect me to be really whiny tomorrow) and did the elliptical machine. I did have sore abs, and it kind of sucked. Fun fact! In Rocky IV, Sylvester Stallone asked that the punches be real, which landed him in the hospital; I still think I have it worse.

Coming back, I finished my laundry and no; I'm not posting pictures because I don't think people want to see my dirty underwear (and if they do, I really don't want to show them). But enough boring talk, I made spaghetti today and it was great! Actually, it wasn't as good as my mom's, but I'm proud for cooking.



You might be saying to yourself "Alfredo, how are you going to put onions powder if you've never eaten onions before?" The truth is that I don't know, my mom always uses onions and it made me feel like I was at home.



Hey look! I'm a data scientist!



Thank people for strainers



Final product

Day 6: Finally getting a bike

2

Posted on June 4, 2017 by avelasco

Unlike some people, not everybody can simply hop on over to the bike place at 8:00 AM. Most people, like me, need sleep to function. That being said, I still managed to be the second person to get my bicycle. It was weird because I thought that I would help for a bit to pay off my bike, but I mostly stood there and barely did any work. I really wanted to help and asked what I could do, but not much was sent my way. The good news is I got my bike! The bad news is that I found out that biking is REALLY hard. REALLY hard. I pedaled for not even five minutes before I thought I was going to die. I was out of breath from a little bit of biking. I eventually got home (way quicker than if I had to wait for the bus) and got home to get ready to return my SD card and get a bike lock. Riding my bike was a HUGE mistake. I was really, really tired and I didn't know if I could continue. Everything was burning and I felt sick. My head hurt and my stomach felt weird. I couldn't tell if I was hungry, I was full (which I shouldn't have been), or if the water made me sick. I was told that the water was fine and someone told me they drink it, but I didn't know why I felt so bad. By the way, I hate hills that go up. It's SO MUCH work to pedal and I just walked up the hills. You'd think that I would have been fine since I use the cycling machines for thirty minutes without a break, but it didn't seem to help. It may be because of the leg day exercises I did yesterday. When I finally came back, I lied on the grass for a bit because I was going to die. Eventually, I went to my room to relax before the picnic.



*Cool glittery statue in
City Hall*

The picnic was nice. We played card games and I got to eat a burger that had turkey instead of beef (I don't know what it would be called). I put BBQ and it was delicious!!! It was a nice time and we were one of the last REUs to leave. Today was hard as fudge, but it got good.



*EC Cardinals! Nah,
Ames also has
cardinals.*



*Awesome sandwich. I wish I remembered the
name of the company.*

Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

Day 5: My phone sucks (and so does exercise)

Posted on June 4, 2017 by avelasco

I HATE TODAY!!! WHY ARE MY ARMS SO SORE?!!?!?! WHY IS THE STUPID AC BROKEN ?!?!?!?!?!?!?! WHY DOESN'T MY SD WORK?!?!?!?! WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE FILES ARE WRITE PROTECTED ?!?!?!? I CHANGED THEIR PERMISSIONS !!!!! I CAN'T FIGURE ANY OF THIS OUT AND I CAN'T TAKE ANY PICTURES !!!!!!!

You know, my life is really hard sometimes and I don't know why. I wish life was easy and everything didn't break for no reason. Anyways, I had to get ready to go to this place called Perfect Games. We played laser tag and it was really awesome. I got first

place!!!!



Seriously!? Taco pizza? Where do people come up with this crap?



First A is me and yes. I am awesome at bowling (even with a broken arm).

After that round, I got to bowl. I should mention again that my arm was REALLY sore. I looked like a velociraptor all morning. I struggled to close my window because of how sore I was. Because of my injury, I couldn't bowl well. Eventually, I was convinced to straighten my arm and bowl; it hurt like heck, but I bowled a strike. I never did as well after that because I don't really know much about bowling. Anyways, the rest of the time wasn't as fun. I mostly walked around figuring out what I should do. I had a few moments with others, but I found out pinball is a great single-player game. Going back was long since I had to go to the store and buy stuff. It took up a huge chunk of time and I didn't get to return a product (they were closed and I left it in another bag). At least I'll make spaghetti and I got a new SD car, so I can take pictures again. Also, some people had Chic-fil-a for the first time. It's funny, I had to walk all the way to another bus station and still got home BEFORE my mini-group, who got home later. BTW, the AC works again. Thank you, Jesus and the AC repair people. Shortly after, I went to the gym and did some muscle building exercises. The people who went with me taught me how to do some workouts. They hurt, but at least I'll get in shape. The rest of the night was spent hanging out and watching people(I was getting behind on these blogs) play Sushi Go.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Day 4: (Not quite yet)Working with the team

Posted on June 3, 2017 by avelasco

Today I walked back to the lab again ~~yo, this whole rhapsody he better go capture this moment and hope it don't pass him~~ and we learned how to find articles that we'll need for our projects. It was REALLY tough because I didn't know what search terms to use, but I think I may have found some result. Afterwards, we took a personality test and it says that I am an INTP personality. I found out one of one of my team members makes plans and follows them, but I tend to go with the flow. The good news is we made a compromise; they'll make a plan, and I'll make one when that one fails. The cool part after that is that we got a tour of some of the technology used at ISU and it's amazing! They have a super computer with 96 \$4000.00 graphics cards! They're connected to projectors and the whole set-up was \$8 million! I couldn't believe the environment that we were allowed to access. Lunch and blog time were good (except I didn't get to finish my blog. Why do I have to write so much?) .

We then had to discuss a difficult topic for me; what are my flaws. Actually, I was able to list off twelve, but nobody is perfect. I'm pretty sure my team with keep me in check. It was all a discussion of what are flaws are and how we can deal with them. The good

1

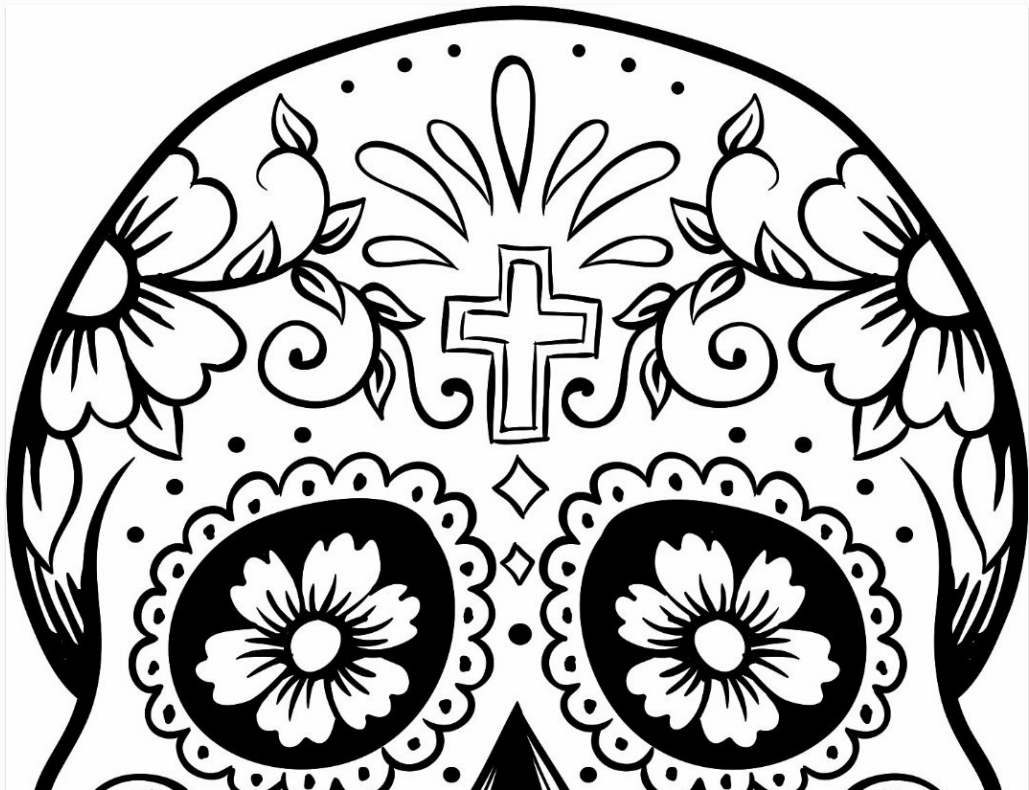
[illegible]

Posted in Uncategorized | 1 Reply

1

I woke up and didn't die from work. #ThanksIGuess

After lunch, we came back and played Heads-Up. It was pretty chaotic and loud, but it was still fun. I said something bad about a city and forgot that somebody was from that city. Yes, it was very embarrassing, but I apologized and found out they didn't really care. I don't know, I always find bad things to say about everyplace, but I never think to think about the people around me and the fact that they may get offended. Actually, during lunch, I was talking to someone and they said a certain town was boring, unaware that the person next to them was from that city. It's good that I work with a diverse group of people because I can now think about what I say and make sure to consider other people's feelings more. I remember my brother told me this story:



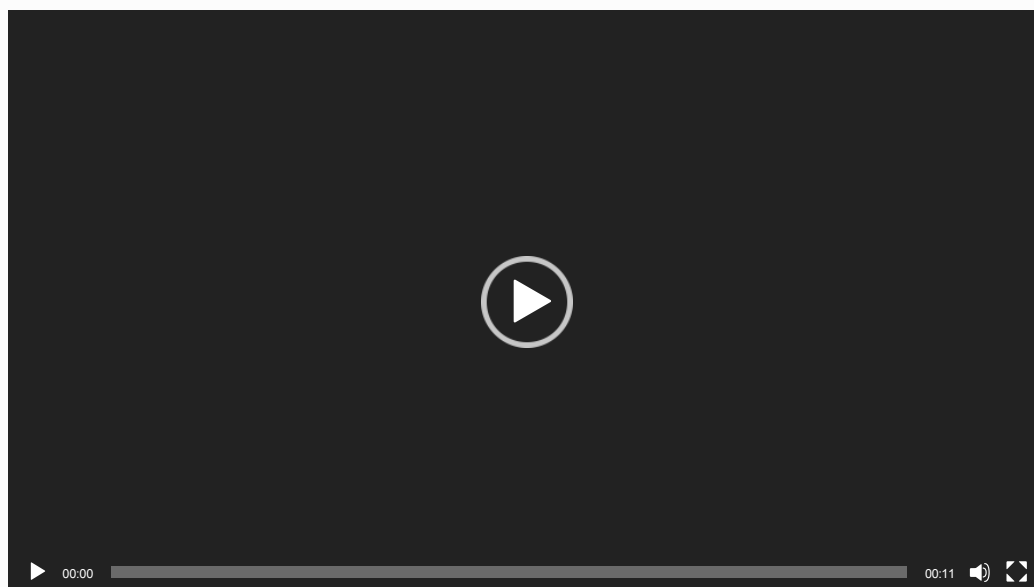


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At his high school, every class has to choose a design for their flag and this one class chose a skull that looks like the ones used for Día de Los Muertos (like the one shown above). Some of the Mexican students were upset because a symbol used for a day of remember those who passed away was being used to a silly design. My brother's teacher was discussing this in a class when one kid said he didn't understand why the choice was offensive. He asked if the kid was Christian(which he was) and how he would feel if a crucifix was chosen and placed on the hallway walls. He said "that would be kind of messed up." The teacher asked how this is any different and he replied "cause it's not that important."

I'll forgive the kid because he's a freshman and he doesn't know any better, but it really teaches an important lesson about how not having a diverse circle can make you say really offensive things. The whole point of this section is to learn from my mistake. I screwed up and apologized, but I'll be sure to be more careful when I word what I say. Anyways, let's forget all I wrote(but NOT the lesson itself) and hope I can try again tomorrow.

After playing the game, we went to the gym which took ages to do. After waiting for an eternity, we finally got a tour and it looks like a pretty cool gym. It has a pool (which we won't be able to use often because of our schedules) and lots of equipment. When we got back, we learned a little about how to formulate a research question. It was REALLY hard because my group look at the project differently than I did. I don't know why, but I never have the same interpretation of something as anybody else does. No wonder English classes were hard for me. The good news was my sentence got used for the last part of the question, so I can say I contributed. Eventually, I got back to my dorm and tried to fix my phone (and failed) before getting ready to go to the gym. I happened to leave for the gym at the same time as someone else, so we went together. I played with the dumbbells for a little bit. Actually, since I'm an adult, I EXERCISED with the dumbbells. I'm going to go ahead and guess I did 100 bicep curls (what? I didn't say it would be a good guess) before getting tired bored and moving on to cycling again. I brought headphones and listened to *The Slim Shady LP*, which was nice and help distract me(but not enough). I was difficult, but I made it through and I was proud. Plus, the seats were 1000000x more comfortable than the one I used yesterday. I went back and showered and talked to my girlfriend before deciding to cook pancakes. Here are the results.



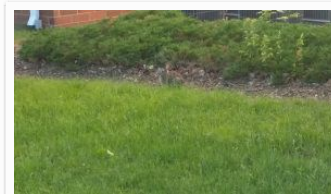
Since it's no secret Mashashi helped me, I'll go ahead and mention him. Anyways, he told me that I MIGHT be able to cook the pancakes since my pan was non-stick. I like to be optimistic and not waste pancakes, so I went ahead and cooked my pancakes and it didn't go well. I somehow set off the fire alarm, but my second batch was good.

Day 2: An Introduction

3

Posted on June 1, 2017 by avelasco

Today, I woke up early and went walking around the campus. I found out there are lots of rabbits on campus, and it's awesome!



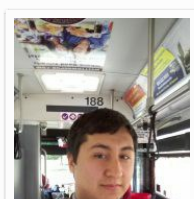
Seriously?!? Why are there so many rabbits?

We started out our day with some little get-to-know-each-other games. I tricked everybody with my two truths and lie. A common pattern was someone would say something that involves a number, then say that number was a little off and thus making it a lie. I said I liked New York (which I did and also loved. Yes, you can like and love something. People may argue with with me and say that I'm wrong, but I think I'm write. Besides, like and love are used interchangeably, unless you're talking about a person). We also had a presentation that was pretty cool. We also had to build a tower out of spaghetti and marshmallows. Our team won because of a technicality; the top of the tower had to be marshmallow and the "winning" team had a little spaghetti sticking out of the top. We also went through a little campus tour and played with a Frisbee and why is Frisbee capital? Seriously, that was the suggested spelling and I don't know why. Sorry, rant over. Anyways, I did Hollywood style catches; they look cool, but didn't actually work in the real world. In my defense, catching a plate that changes directions every five seconds is WAY harder than you would think. Despite the difficulties of catching, I had lots of fun and I hope we can do it again.



I don't know how they got TJ Miller to come here and I'm impressed that they did

We also ate at the food court, and I liked it. The only disappointing part was a got a hot dog that wasn't a hot dog. It was a polish/cheddar/cheese/sausage or something. It had cheese inside of it and honestly, I have no idea how they get it in there. Anyways, lunch was good and I talked to a graduate student and learned a little more about graduate school. After lunch, we went back and did more stuff at the lab (where other people and I got horribly lost. It was embarrassing, but at least I learned how NOT to get to the lab). After all of the work was done, we learned about the buses and learned how to take them to out apartments. I felt like I was taking a subway and it was really cool!





*Guess who's back in
New York, baby!
PSYCH! It's just my first
bus ride in Iowa.*

After going back, I went to the gym with others and went on the biking machine for a whole 30 minutes! It hurt and I couldn't walk correctly, so I'm pretty proud of myself. I even walked back to my dorm and I hope to be healthy this summer. Lastly, my roommate set up his VR system. It was really cool! We played this game where this robot, that looks a lot like WALL-E, gave you disks that would 3-D print objects you could grab. They also played an iRobot style shooter game. Anyways, today was a good day and I hope I find out what I'll do for research. May God guide me through these tough times.

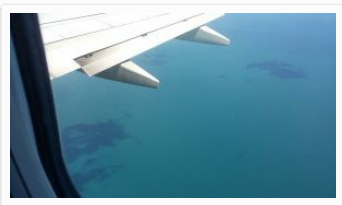
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Day 1: Arriving

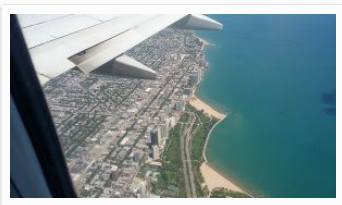


Posted on June 1, 2017 by avelasco

Today was my first REU day (technically). I woke up, told my parents to drive me to the airport, checked in my bags (one was really light since it only had a laptop and I had to take it out since it couldn't be checked in). I had a little trouble at security since I forgot to pack my razor in my check-in bags (this is why you don't pack late, kids). I helped the TSA agent find it and told him to throw the blades away. I got to my terminal and it was delayed, which was actually a good thing. It turns out that you're supposed to show up at least ten minutes before the plane leaves, otherwise they don't let you in. If that flight wasn't delayed, I would have shown up late. It's times like these that remind me that someone is watching over me. I boarded upon my plane to Chicago where I watched The Founder. It's about the guy who made McDonald's the huge company it is today. I only watched half of it, but I like the half I saw. Also, I saw this beautiful lake as I headed into Chicago!!!



Beautiful blue lake



*Must be nice for these people to live next to
the water.*

I should mention that this plane ride was bumpy. Like, really bumpy. I got motion sick and I'm not afraid to admit that I threw up. Luckily, the girl next to me gave me this mini-toothbrush. I don't know what it is or how the technology behind it works, but it actually leaves your mouth with a minty feeling. She also gave me some pills which I assumed stopped motion sickness (that's what she told me. I don't normally take pills from strangers, but I didn't care at that point). We finally landed in Chicago and I just thanked God that part of my flight was over. I asked one of the flight attendants where I was supposed to throw away my bag since the instructions (yes, vomit bags have instructions on them) said not to flush them in the toilet, but instead put them in the proper waste receptacle. He asked if I used it, then asked if I threw up, which really has me wondering what else he thought I did with it. Anyways, he told me to set it down on one of the seats (everybody was leaving at this point). I actually felt bad because that meant someone had to throw away somebody's used bag, and I assume they don't get paid enough for those tasks. Anyways, I thanked the stranger again and went to claim my baggage. Fun fact; you don't claim luggage at every stop! Another fun fact; this is my first flight alone, which explains why I did so poorly. Anyways, I was told my luggage would be sent directly to Des Moines. They also told me which gate to head to, which was great since I thought I would go to another terminal! Again, somebody was watching over. Anyways, I had to go back through security, which slowed me down because of the razor (and the TSA agent didn't let me point out where it was), which caused me to race towards my terminal. I was actually the last passenger to board and I know this because as soon as I got to the gate, they called me by name. I was hot and sweaty, and it didn't help that the plane was super hot. They turned off the AC because of inspection. I actually fell asleep during this flight, so it wasn't long before I was in Iowa. I went to the baggage claim area when I realized I didn't see my mentor. I called him and he said he would arrive in a blue collared golf shirt. We met, along with my lab partner, and ate at a deli named Parmer's. I've never gone to one before, and I liked it. The food was good and my mentor even picked up the tab!



Delicious roast beef sandwich

I don't know if I was homesick, but Des Moines felt very much like Tulsa. If you're curious, there's a street in Tulsa with a Hideaway's Pizza and

Andolini's Pizza; the street where the deli was located felt exactly like that street. My mentor said he would often come to Des Moines to run errands, which reminds of a town outside Tulsa named Claremore. It's also a college town and it's very common for people to commute to Tulsa. Sorry for bringing up my hometown when nobody reading this will understand what I mean. I don't care, my heritage is important to me and I refuse to dismiss it. Anyways, I moved in and my roommates were pretty chillax. My brother called and I found out I took my car keys! I really wished I hadn't taken it, but I guess it's too late. Also, we went to a restaurant named Wallaby's. I had a bacon cheeseburger and I actually thought there was a perfume bottle on the table! It was the salt and pepper shaker. Actually, I thought it was full of cumin. I don't know, everything was new to me.



*Seriously! Does this not
look like
perfume/cumin?*



At least my burger was delicious

I meet my other mentor and the program coordinator. They all introduced themselves by their first name and I have to say, that is really weird. I mean, the mentors are professors with PhDs and they didn't call themselves doctors! I once called my professor "professor" and he told me not to do that. Honestly, I'm still not sure what to call them and I was too afraid to ask again at that point. Also, I found out that the whole point of this program is to get me into graduate school. I'll be honest, graduate school is not my top priority. Honestly, my current plan is to get my bachelor's in computer science, move to New York, then get a job as a programmer. I thought about graduate school, but I am just so uncertain about it. Luckily, it was explained that this program would tell us if we want to go to graduate school. My professor at my school tells me I could get into the world of finance and use machine learning to pick stocks. I gave up on that dream once I graduated high school, but I'm starting to get excited of being a hotshot stockbroker on Wall Street! Anyways, this program will help me decide what to do. After eating, we went to Walmart where I made bought all of my stuff like a real adult. I'm kidding, I had to call my girlfriend and she told me what to buy. I bought everything and I told the cashier this was my first time buying stuff alone. We laughed because she was correct in assuming my mom bought everything. I went home and took everything in one trip! I made a heck of a racket as a went up the stairs, but I didn't get caught. I put some stuff away, then went to sleep.

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