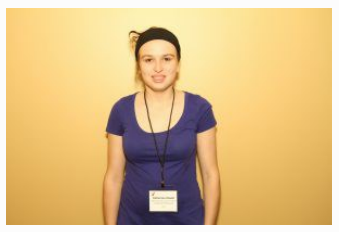




Katherine Atwell



Wrapping up (Sort of...)

Posted on August 3, 2017 by katwell

So a lot's happened since the last time I blogged! For one thing, I got my glasses (hallelujah!). For another, I edited Axure in order to record and edit a video about our prototype. It was a pretty nice video (if I do say so myself), and I'll definitely keep Photoshop in mind when editing videos in the future because it's surprisingly easy and pretty functional. I didn't know you could edit videos in Photoshop but apparently you can.

Also, a bunch of the crew went to dinner and the ice rink yesterday, which was fun. I fell down a couple times (not ashamed to admit it!), and sent someone's phone flying (oops). But other than that it was great, and lots of fun!

It's pretty crazy to think that we're leaving here in two days. We said our goodbyes to Jamiahus today at the symposium, and Quinn is going to be here tomorrow but after that we won't see him. And after going to Spice (or is it The Spice) tomorrow, that'll be goodbye. Of course, we'll see each other, likely that night, but even then time is running out.

It's pretty crazy how much we all learned during this whole process. Before this, our group didn't know what traffic incident managers were, not to mention how to go through the process of rapid prototyping or how to use all of this different software. It's pretty insane, and I feel like I sort of have an idea now of what grad school is like, which is really cool. Also, getting to work in a team was pretty awesome, and I'm glad to have had such good group to work with (shoutout to y'all). It's been a crazy but fun ten weeks, and it's hard to believe that it's coming to an end.

Anyway, I'll hopefully post again before I leave, but if I don't it's been a nice ride! Doing this has been super rewarding, and I'll miss coming into work at the VRAC everyday.

Adieu for now,

Kate





Here's our video for anyone interested

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

I Can See Clearly Now... wait

3

Posted on July 31, 2017 by katwell

Hello all!

This is Kate, reporting from the first day of (cries) our last week here. I'm trying not to think about it, so I'm going to write about more trivial things.

For one, I can't see super well at the moment. Why, you might ask? Well, on Saturday, one of my contact lenses split in half (don't ask, no clue how it happened). I continued to use the other contact lens for the rest of the day, but unfortunately 1) It was a bit disorienting and 2) I couldn't find my box of lenses and it was very possible that I was out. So, in order to get through the rest of this week I asked my mom if she could ship my glasses up here, as I stupidly decided not to pack them when I came. She requested priority overnight shipping, but unfortunately they're not arriving until tomorrow morning, likely after work starts. So if I don't see you walk by or don't make eye contact with you, it's not on purpose, I swear! And when I come in Tuesday or Wednesday with a pair of large hipster glasses, that's why.

So that's been fun. Currently my screen is zoomed in at 150% and my face is 4-5 inches away from it, but the good news is I can see it better than expected! Sorry about any potential spelling errors that may come up, though!

So today is likely going to be a lot of close reading of our paper, as one advantage of a limited field of vision is a lack of ability to skim. In addition, our group might discuss our findings from the testing and how we are going to communicate them at tomorrow's meeting. Today we met with Jamiahus and Quinn, which provided some insight into what we should do before we leave in order for others to pick up where we left off. It also gave us some insight into what we will do during this "transition period", and in terms of publications and conferences. Hopefully Montreal is in our near future.

In terms of a weekend recap, I'll give a few highlights:

Saturday

- Farmers' market
- Unsuccessfully searching for MAC in the mall
- Netflix
- 2 hour phone call with the fam
- Walk around campus

Sunday

- Church with Sofia
- UDCC for lunch
- Fun bike ride around campus (Welcome to our crib!)
- Tree climbing
- Bachelorette catch-up
- Bike ride pt. 2
- Dinner at (you guessed it) UDCC
- Star Wars
- An hour of super weird but super awesome Youtube videos

Anyway, that's about it for this post time to work on proofreading the paper and formatting references!

Ciao for now,

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | 3 Replies

Friday!!! (also last Friday at work)

1

Posted on July 28, 2017 by katwell

Hey y'all,

So I'm a bit pumped today, and not just because it's the weekend.

For one thing, we're all dressed super fancy today. Why, you may ask? Well, we did interviews today for a video that Paul is going to edit and put on the VRAC website. So TIMELI color coordinated (or did the opposite, as we did a grayscale). May have pictures to come, as Paul took a couple group pictures.

Paul then took group photos of all of us, which was cool. We did a couple serious pictues and a couple funny ones.

Also, we might have a surprise video coming up, as organized by Brittney. We will see, more details on that to come!

Around half the gang, as Emma would say, went to MU for lunch today. It was a bit of a spur of the moment thing, but the burritos were really good and some funny conversations were had!

Right now my main research focus is to work on citations I used for the lit review, as well as add more information on current traffic incident management software. In addition, I'm going to work on the background a bit, aka the summary of the TIMs' process.

Sofia's and my computers are acting kind of weird, so we can't see our poster in Sans Serif, but beyond that our poster's finished and looks great!

After work, I am likely going to watch the new Bachelorette and go to bed early, to maybe go to the farmer's market tomorrow. We'll see! Oh yeah, also have to ship stuff back home, so that'll be fun.

I think soon I'm going to put up a bunch of pictures I've taken throughout my time here and do a blog post about that. May also feature other people's shots, just want to capture some of the highlights of our time here. So expect that coming soon!

And that is about it for my blog today. Until tomorrow (or, more likely, Monday),

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | 1 Reply

STRESSSS



Posted on July 27, 2017 by katwell

Hey everyone! So as you might have read from Sofia's and Chris' blogs, yesterday our team went to the TMC to test our prototype. A big step for us, and even though we can't use our data for publications (we're hearing back from the IRB next week), we really wanted to do it right and get good data that can put us in the right direction.

Here are some of the struggles we faced:

- We were racing against time to get all the materials together to test our prototype on Quinn beforehand. We worked on the testing script and procedure, the errors sheet, and the components of the prototype in order to prep for it. There were a lot of things we realized we had to edit as we went through.
- After testing with Quinn and eating a quick lunch, we had about half an hour to make new printables. By the time we settled on locations for all three areas, we had ten minutes until we had to leave and still had a bunch of things to make and cut out. I had to quickly edit the DMS boards through Axure to reflect the current locations, then take a screenshot and print hem. Meanwhile, Sofia and Chris were frantically cutting things out. We went 10 minutes over, and had to cut papers in the car.
- We forgot to bring in a folder of printables. Luckily, we had ones from previous prototypes and used those.
- We took out a step along the way, as we ran out of time to reprint a layer to reflect the change in location.
- We should have been a bit more thorough in terms of locations. That's all I'm going to say about that.

It went really well, though! This list might suggest otherwise, but the good thing about a complex paper prototype is that it's very flexible, and it was pretty easy to keep track of errors. The atmosphere was also very friendly, and the TMC staff were very receptive of us and our design. It also seemed like it was very intuitive.

I was super tired afterwards, but went to Wal-Mart with Emma, Jameel, and Sushi after work. Probably a bad decision on my part, as I ended up sitting down a good percentage of the time, but we got McDonald's afterwards which was nice!

Now poster session here we come!

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Lot of Info



Posted on July 25, 2017 by katwell

I don't like to get super backed up on blogging, since I tend to make my posts a bit long, but it happened. Don don don. So now please enjoy a nice recap of the past week, brought to you by yours truly!

WEDNESDAY

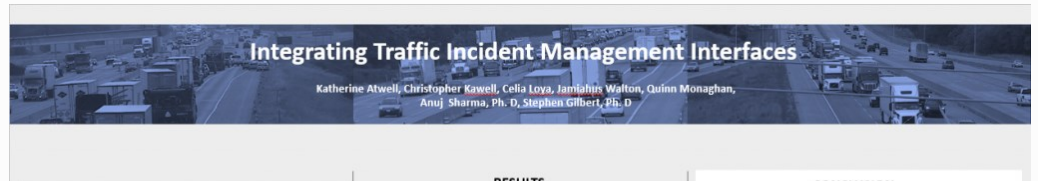
Okay, to be honest, I have no clue what happened on Wednesday. I asked Chris, and he doesn't remember, there was nothing set on the calendar, and OneDrive didn't have any major edits. I remember I started a draft that day entitled "I don't know what to post"...

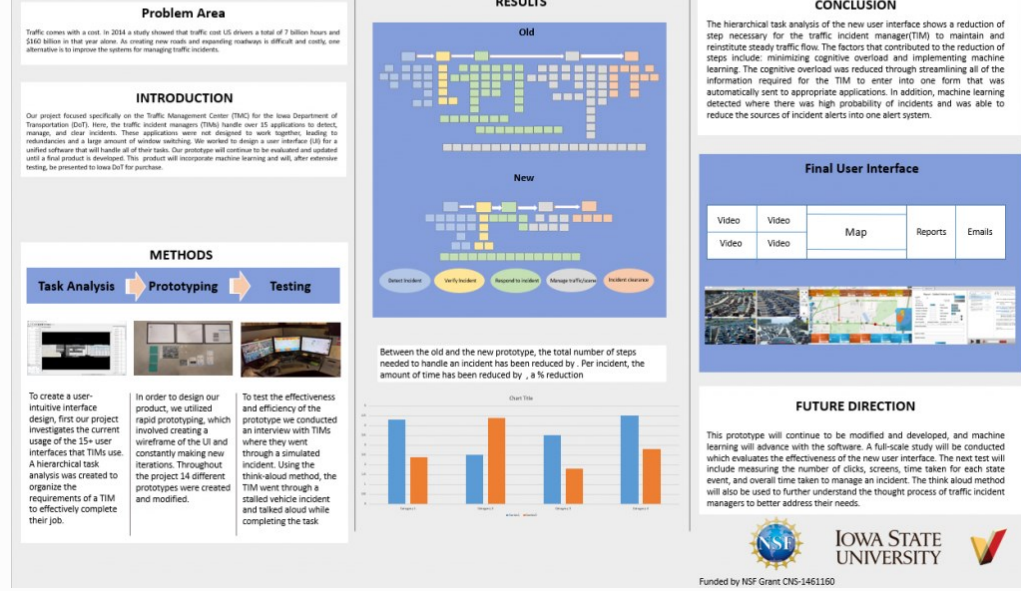
THURSDAY

Dr. Gilbert did his luncheon lecture on Thursday and that was pretty cool! He talked about his research on intelligent tutoring systems and the AR counterpart to what the WATCH team is doing. When I thought of intelligent tutoring systems, I thought about helping people with their homework, not some of the many other applications that include taking people through a software program or a video game for the first time. It was interesting to hear how wide-spanning the applications were.

FRIDAY

We got our poster draft submitted (which is now updated). This is what it looked like at the time:





It's now two columns and we made some of the graphics bigger and made a few other changes, but other than that it's similar to our current poster draft.

I also watched the Bachelorette with Brittney and Sofia, and it was good! I'm now up to speed (besides the one last night, which hasn't come out online yet).

SATURDAY

Saturday was super fun! I didn't get to take any pictures, as I didn't take my phone in my kayak, so I might steal other people's.



Here's a "funny" group picture of all of us

It was a really good time. We played a fun game called "contact" that was pretty easy to play in the kayaks. We also got to swim a little bit. Britney and I got into a bit of a predicament, but besides that all was good! Probably my favorite group activity to date.

SUNDAY

Me, Jameel, Emma, Sofia, Brittney, Austin, and Sushi went to Jordan Creek Mall in Des Moines. It was a super nice mall, and the stores had really good discounts on summer clothes. Definitely way better than the Ames mall, and we got a bunch of nice stuff for really good prices.

After shopping I was pretty wiped, so I watched TV for a bit until 9ish when Brittney, Chris, Austin, Alfredo and I watched Star Wars: A New Hope. Actually, we didn't start until around 9:45 due to some technical difficulties. It was good though, and we watched until around midnight.

MONDAY

We had a lot of free time and spent a bunch of it working on our poster and our scenario. We printed the paper components out and got to run through it briefly. A wonderful quote was also born.

TUESDAY

We had our lab meeting this morning and got to run through our scenario with Quinn, our guinea pig. We might ask someone if they don't mind letting us run through with them for some more practice.

The speaker today, Dr. Chase Muesel, talked about grad school and transitioning from grad school to industry (if that's something we want to do, which I'm thinking about doing). he also said we could contact him about anything, which I think I will. I want to know about the tech jobs in New York he was talking about.

Right now we're preparing for our test tomorrow. It's all coming together, which is really nice. I'm hoping today will be a chill day once I get back from work.

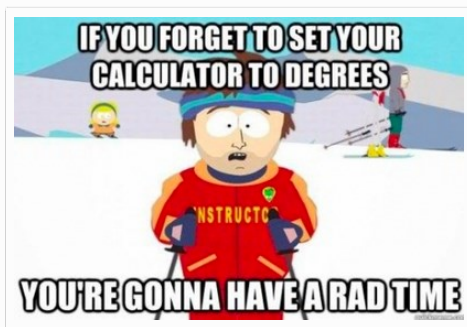
That's about it! This was super long but I thought I kept it pretty short, all things considered. Now time to get back to my super-sugary turtle latte (and scenario design!).

Until next time,

Kate

"You say tomato, I say tomahto, IRB says "you're fired", I say "oh man"."

- Sofia Loya



Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

Slightly Better Tuesday

1

Posted on July 18, 2017 by katwell

Hello all! Today's blog post will be about my slightly better day than the one before. For one thing, I submitted a police report on my bike, so it's out of my hands now. If it's not found, Anna said that I might be able to borrow her old bike once she gets a new one, which would be awesome! I have to say though, I'm never using another cable lock again. Although why people want our old bikes is beyond me.

For another thing, we had our meeting today and it gave us a lot of direction. We're now going to attempt a functional prototype for testing on Axure, and if that doesn't work out we're going to use paper. Either way, the Axure prototype will be useful for the developers, which will be good!

Also, I watched two more episodes of the Bachelorette last night! Not really relevant at all, but they were really funny and dramatic. It's a nice escape from reality, especially as these last couple of weeks come up and deadlines start to loom ever closer. Also I really like Rachel, and the contestants(?) are really entertaining.

So on to our project: we got a lot of really good feedback today and I think we're really close to our final prototype. Chris and I are going to work in Axure on it and Sofia's going to work more on the paper prototype. At the same time, we'll all be coming up with different metrics to test, making an HTA for the new system to compare to the old HTA, and possibly taking time data from the videos to get a sense of the time cut with the new system. This way, we'll be able to get some quantitative data even before testing our subjects. Oh, and we'll be working on a poster draft as well, and the rest of our paper components.

In other news: our presenter for the luncheon lecture today was a really cool professor, Dr. Rick Stone. He was pretty awesome, and has done a ton of different things so far in his lifetime. He's currently a Deputy Sheriff, a professor, and a member of the city dive team (unfortunately, not the type of dive team you might be picturing). We talked about Game of Thrones (sorry Emma!), people he's seen while on duty as a cop, and lots of other fun topics in addition to discussing his research. It was fun, and a really dynamic conversation.

That's about it for today! Hope you all have a good rest of the week!

Kate

That heart stopping feeling you get

when you've lost one of these:

+C



Meme #3

Posted in Uncategorized | 1 Reply

The Tragedy of the Bike

7

Posted on July 17, 2017 by katwell

So today has been thus far overshadowed by one sad occurrence: when I left for work this morning, my bike was gone.

Then another fun thing happened: I found out that there was a detour and that there were no buses servicing Freddy Court right now. Which was probably why someone stole my bike. So I walked to work this morning, with no end to walking in sight.

Anyway, departing from that sad note: this weekend was pretty nice. Went to Hy-Vee on Saturday, which was a pretty bad experience. Not the Hy-Vee part, but the bus system. Probably the worst bus experience I have had thus far here, which is saying a lot, considering all of the crazy bus experiences Emma and I have had thus far.

Anywaysyyyyy..... later Austin, Emma, Sofia, Brittney, Alfredo and I went to Hickory Park Restaurant. The food was pretty good, although the wait was around 40 min. We managed, though, and got a nice picture with Cy to boot!



Also, it was Emma's "birthday", so wish her a happy 20th!

Sunday was pretty chill. Emma and I went to McDonald's to do some work, and I got some free ice cream for National Ice Cream Day. I was pretty tired after that, and didn't do a ton afterwards. I did start The Bachelorette though, and it's really good so far! I really like Rachel, and Dean's pretty cool. Am going to finish the second episode at some point today after work.

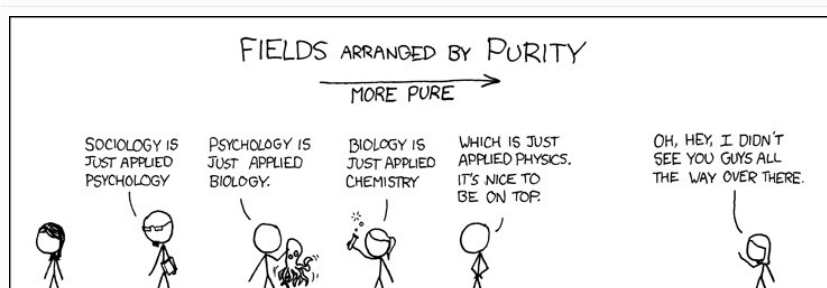
Anyway, about today. Our team is working more on the prototype this afternoon, after working on the introduction some this morning. We're going to be more specific about the functional aspects of it on this go-around, with info on more specific buttons and toolbars.

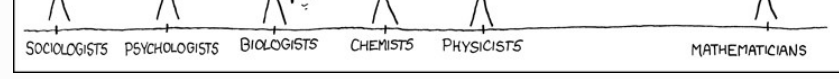
By Friday we're hoping to have our poster draft done, a new prototype (beyond the one we're talking about today), and a decent paper draft that'll have everything but our results and conclusion.

Tonight I think I'm going to work on the lit review paragraph some, as well as maybe doing some Axure and/or poster draft. We'll see!

Will hopefully post tomorrow, until then have a marvelous Monday!

Kate





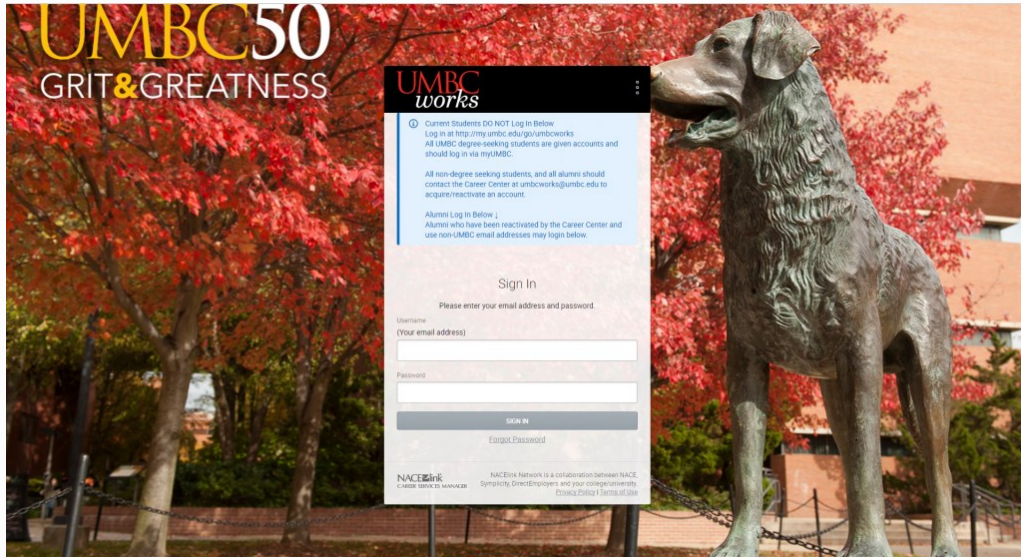
This one's an old one but still good

Posted in Uncategorized | 7 Replies

Good UX and Bad UI

Posted on July 14, 2017 by katwell

Hello all! For our Intro to HCI course, we were tasked to find examples of good UX (user experience) and bad UI (user interface). As such:

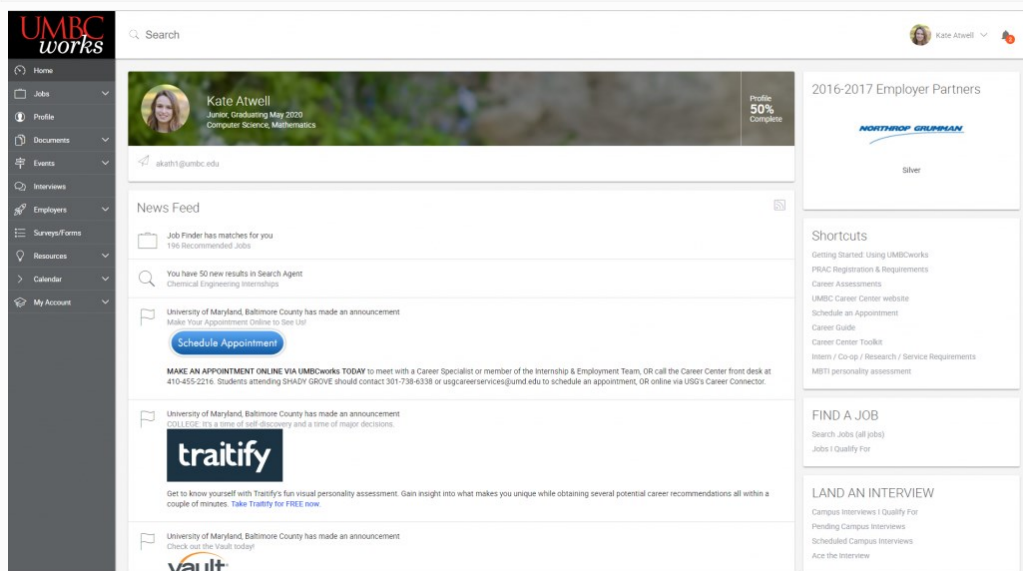
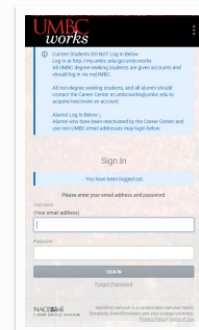


My bad UI is UMBC's career portal, entitled UMBCWorks. I know that I'm kind of throwing my school under the bus for this one, but maybe it'll prompt change in the design a little bit.

For one thing, in the screenshot above, it's not cropped at all—it's just not super well-optimized for different screens. Which is fine, just makes it a bit of a pain.

Second, let me zoom in a bit. The default sign-in portal to the right is the one for alumni who no longer have a UMBC email, not those who still have a login or current students. In addition, when directing the students to their login screen, they have a URL typed out, but it does not have a link so the student has to copy and paste the text into another tab. Not a huge issue, but an easy fix that for some reason has not been addressed.

Now for the regular screen itself, post sign-in. It looks sort of like a social media site, yet it also lets you link to your LinkedIn profile.



In addition, looking at it, the user has no idea where to start. It's so unintuitive that when classes require it, they give students instructions with screenshots on how to get where they need to in the website.

Screen Shot #1: Go to the navigation on the left side. Click on "My Account" at the bottom, click on "Intern/Co-op/Research/Service/Student Employment"

Screen Shot #1 - Go to the gray panel on the left-side. Click on "My Account," at the bottom, click on "Intern/Co-op/Research/Service/Student Employment Requirements."

Screen Shot #2 - You should be able to access your current service site. WARNING! For those that have done multiple applied learning experiences, particularly at the same site, MAKE SURE YOU ARE COMPLETING THE CURRENT TERM!!!! Click "Review" to make sure!

Some of you may find that your site supervisor has already completed a Performance evaluation. Click onto "Performance Evaluation" to double-check.

Case in point

I think one of the reasons why it's so frustrating to use is because there are too many buttons. Looking at it, the news feed is sort of poorly integrated into the main site, when most people do not go onto UMBCworks specifically for the news feed – they use LinkedIn.

In addition, in order to put your resume on UMBCworks (which students are encouraged to do), do you go to "Profile", "Documents", or "My Account"? The answer is "Documents" but it takes a bit of digging to figure this out.

Initially, when going into college, I was a chemical engineering major. If you look closely, you'll see that my news feed still only has info related to chemical engineering careers.

In short, the interface is not very modern, intuitive, or nice looking. I've never heard of a UMBC student actually using UMBCworks for anything other than required purposes. For networking, students use LinkedIn, and for looking up opportunities, they can use ur.umbc.edu, the undergraduate research website which is a lot more user-friendly.

UMBCworks was made for a valid reason, and it was a good idea. However, in order to make it serve its purpose it must be better-designed.

Disclaimer: I really like my school and it has a really good career center that's helped me a lot. UMBCworks has only been around for a short time and still has a lot of improvements ahead of it. However, right now there are definitely things that could be improved.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Math Memes and Meetings

8

Posted on July 13, 2017 by katwell

Hey y'all! Kate here, to write about last night and what's happened thus far today!

Yesterday we had our video chat with the USC REU, where we did our presentations. All the presentations were really good, and we learned a lot about their projects. We also got good presenting experience, which was really nice. It wasn't as nerve-wracking as I expected.

After work a bunch of us went to Mr. Burrito, and let me say the burritos were really good! Seriously, I need to make a trip there in the future. And they're really inexpensive as well, only \$6.99 and guac isn't extra!

Spider-Man was also wonderful. The gang went at 7:30, and so of course the movie didn't start until 8. It was really good though, and had an interesting plot twist that made everyone gasp.

This morning I felt pretty under the weather, not gonna lie. Feeling a bit better now, though, and hoping that trend continues!

TIMELI met this morning to prototype, talk a bit about poster layout, and make a game plan. Then Chris and I designed a scenario for testing while Sofia worked on an introduction (we already have one, but we're writing multiple to decide which format we like best). After this post, I'm going to take a stab at the background. I'll then likely make a couple poster mock-ups to see which one the group likes best (the poster draft milestone is this week, and although we don't have to complete it I'd like to at least get a start).

For our luncheon lecture today, Dr. Jared Danielson talked to us about his research on education, specifically for those in vet school. It was interesting, and what interested me the most was that it didn't make a difference whether the lectures were viewed in-class or remotely. In fact, in some cases, the remote lectures improved learning. Good news for online students or those who can't make it to class.

The memes part comes in after the meeting, where Alfredo, Manny and I somehow got on the subject of just that. Alfredo also introduced me to this pretty cool mathematician called [Paul Erdos](#). He had many interesting aspects of his personality, such as calling children "epsilons". In addition, I now follow a page called Mathematical Memes for Logarithmically Scaled Teens. I might take a leaf out of Austin's book and start putting math memes in my posts.

Anyway, that's about all that's happened since that last time I blogged. Until next time,

Kate

Friend: Hey can you help me with revision?
Me: Sure, what subject?
Friend: Physics



Posted in Uncategorized | 8 Replies

Gloomy Wednesday

3

Posted on July 12, 2017 by katwell

The “gloomy” part of this post is mostly related to the weather, not the mood. Although I think there’s a bit of a cloud of dread surrounding the presentations.

I’m actually not too worried about them. It’ll definitely be nice practice, which I’m looking forward to. We also have two “backup slides”, and are hoping someone asks about the info on them. We’re also pretty well-prepared and have a good idea of what we’re each going to say.

I’m mostly worried about the rest of the week, and the research that comes with it. I definitely feel like I need to do more lit review, and look into a couple specific articles (thankfully I printed them out, so I’ll remember to read them).

In terms of non-work-related activities, Sofia, Brittney, Alfredo, Manny and I did a cycling class yesterday. My legs surprisingly aren’t sore, although it was definitely hard; I’m pretty tired today.

I think we’re seeing Spiderman tonight, which I’m pretty excited about. I’ve been excited to see it for awhile now, and have heard from a lot of people that it’s the best one yet.

In terms of our paper, we’re still working on the first three sections and are changing the structure a bit. That’s another thing we have to talk about as a group when we meet tomorrow. In addition, we need to design a couple scenarios for the next group meeting.

That’s about all I have for today! Don’t have a ton more to write about. Oh yeah, Eliot’s ethics talk. I enjoyed it a lot, and am looking forward to it again tomorrow. I really like looking at morally gray scenarios like the ones he was talking about and analyzing them in-depth. It’s fun to talk about things where there’s not really a right or wrong answer.

Anyway, now I think I’m done! Going to get back to work on the paper and on designing some things.

Will update again soon (hopefully),

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | 3 Replies

College Bucket List

8

Posted on July 11, 2017 by katwell

We had our talk with Eliot today about his career and grad school specifically. He talked about a lot of interesting things, including his start-ups and the technology he worked with. He’s talking to us again today about ethics, and is going to mention ethics issues he faced with his companies.

One thing that I thought was really cool was the start-ups. I’ve never considered having a start-up until I came here, but I know a bunch of people here are really interested in it and the more I’ve learned about it the more I’ve thought about it. I definitely still want to go to grad school, but having that option as well would be really cool.

I was talking to Sofia about it afterwards, and she said that she wants to start at least one start-up during undergrad. I have other friends talking about that as well, and think it would be really cool. That got us talking about what we want to do before finishing undergrad.

Without further ado, here is what I want to do in the next three years:

- Independent research project
- Completed Hackathon project
- Start a start-up (and put a lot of time into it)
- Do a big community service project
- Travel outside the US (whether for study abroad, vacation, or some other reason)
- Run a long-distance race
- Write a novel (creative writing minor, come through)
- Make a blog, and keep updating it

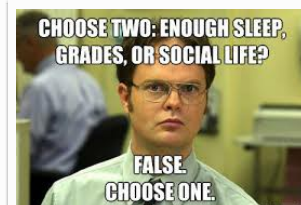
The last one’s kind of funny, since of course we have one already. I want to keep blogging after this program is over, though. I really enjoy writing and it’s kind of fun to express myself online. Dr. Gilbert told Natalie and I about this scientist named Hope Jahren who keeps a blog about her life in academia among other things. She’s now a published author and everything. Not that I expect to do any of that, but it would be really cool to keep writing and expressing myself even as I start a scientific career.

Anyway, this post was a lot more optimistic than the one earlier. One thing I really like about my time here is that we’ve had the chance to creatively problem-solve in a way I haven’t done before, certainly not at school, and it has me wondering how I can take that back to my school and start something really exciting there. Not to mention I want to do some fun stuff during my undergraduate education!

Also, this is a way for me to justify buying a VR headset.

That’s all for now, as we are off to practice our presentation (which seems a little bit less stressful now).

Until the next post,



I would wait until 1, but there's not a huge chunk of time right now before the luncheon lecture and I feel like this is the most productive thing I can do with my time until then. Great reason to blog, right?

So a little stressful. I think that now the Major Course Activity is done, the research is sort of hitting us in the face.

It will be all research-related work, which will be nice. Maybe I'll do some C++ and Unity practice as well, just for the heck of it. Even though our group doesn't need those for our project per say, I don't want to lose those skills.

On the plus side, the group got boba yesterday! That was pretty good!

Friday

-

KEEP TALKING
AND NOBODY EXPLODES...

**BOMB
DEFUSAL
MANUAL**

Version 1
Verification Code #41

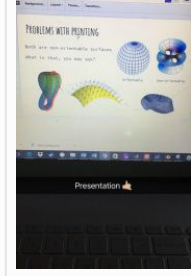
Wiley Training and Randy Replogle © 2015

Defusation 1

A screenshot of a web browser's address bar. The URL is partially visible and appears to be a long alphanumeric string, possibly a hash or a unique identifier, followed by a file extension like .pdf or .doc.

raspberries, honey, and a bit of almond milk is a winning combination.

- Afterwards, we had a group meeting at the VRAC. Kept it to 2.5 hours, which was good! We had a lot to do and we got a lot done. Our Powerpoint for Wednesday is mostly complete, but I'm gonna work a bit on the Methods slide today. We also finished our application for the symposium, which included the most important piece: the title. We present **Integrating Traffic Incident Management Interfaces**. On the Powerpoint I tried to make an acronym (InTIme) but, for good reason, got shot down.
- We saw a cool poster session when we were leaving, so we explored a bit and talked to a team that was making energy efficient houses and mobile labs. Pretty cool, I know
- After that, I made dinner and then Sofia and I worked on our Major Course Activity presentation (3-D Printing is making one together).
- Then it was off to bed for a (somewhat) early night.



I would apologize for the word count, but I kinda liked writing this post so I'll just say thank you to the people who read this far!

Also, fun fact: this post took an hour to write. Guess that's what happens when you write too much and are writing about three days.

With that I will end my post for today and work on our group's presentation.

Until next time,

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | 4 Replies

Wednesday, Thursday, and a bit of Friday



Posted on July 7, 2017 by katwell

Not the most original title in the world, I know, but here's the promised blog post about Wednesday (and Thursday. And today. Oops.)!

Wednesday

- ◊ Not a lot scheduled, meaning a lot of time to work on our projects, or in my case, catch up on the Deeper Dive. I definitely put the Major Course Activity on the backburner last week and it's coming back to bite me. Good news is I'm a lot farther than I was! More on that later though.
- ◊ After work, like the basic person I am, I studied at... Starbucks! If only Caribou were open, I would've studied there, but summer hours being what they are...
- ◊ Around 7, I headed back to make Old Bay ramen part 2! This time tried a stir fry with a couple veggies and it was even better than the initial noodles. May make it tonight...or zoodles...we'll see.
- ◊ Got to watch Netflix for the second time this summer after that! Yeah, for someone who really likes Netflix, I haven't set aside a lot of time to indulge. Planning to do that this weekend, though, in between working on my MCA presentation, sketches, and the paper components!

Thursday

- ◊ Spent a lot of the day 3D printing, and have two prints to show for it! Going to do one more print, which will probably take longer than 17 minutes, but will hopefully turn out well!
- ◊ The fire alarm went off. What caused it, I don't know. All I know is that next time I will bring out my laptop during any sort of fire alarm (not because it got incinerated – don't worry, Mom and Dad, you don't have to buy me a new laptop – but because I couldn't get any work done out there).
- ◊ We had an etiquette lunch! I'd had something similar last summer, but I learned a couple new things such as what to do in the event of a disastrous spill and that sending thank you cards using old-fashioned mail with a stamp is always appreciated (don't send it 6 months late, though!).
- ◊ Back at Freddy, I used some of the abundant chickpeas, potatoes, and leftover cilantro to make something that took a long time, but was good! Plus I got to use some of that smoked paprika.
- ◊ Made banana ice cream for the second night in a row! Since we have approximately 20 bananas in our apartment right now (no joke). Hopefully that number will decrease tonight though.

Am actually going to wait on writing about today until tonight, as there will likely be lots of fun shenanigans to write about, such as the 14-banana pudding. I will update again either today or tomorrow!

Until some time hopefully in the next 24 hours!

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Extended Weekend Recap



Posted on July 5, 2017 by katwell

Like the title? 'Cause it's both an extension of the previous recap and a recap of the extended weekend? Okay, I'll stop.

So on to recapping Monday, Tuesday, and maybe a bit of Wednesday thus far:

Monday

- So Monday TIMELI had a morning meeting with Dr. Hesham Hassan and Lakshay, who are working on UI design and

- development, respectively. The meeting was pretty successful, and we started on the path towards combining elements from both of our designs.
- After the meeting, we went back to Freddy, where my family picked me up and we headed to Des Moines.
 - We planned on watching the fireworks and the orchestra but ended up not staying long enough to do so (it was really gross outside). We did go to Zombie Burger, which was pretty good!
 - We had a blast at the sculpture garden, mainly because it didn't exactly fit their expectations. They were apparently expecting more lifelike statues and flowers and all that. The sculpture garden is cool but definitely did not fit that.
 - We ended up seeing the Ames fireworks, which were actually really nice! There were definitely quite a lot of people doing their own displays, which made for an interesting scene before the real fireworks started.
 - Back to Freddy, with another long day ahead!

Tuesday:

- Woke up at the late hour of 9:30. Got flag-colored pancakes with my mom from a nearby breakfast place.
- Played mini golf with the fam. I came in third place, or second, depending on which way you look at it.
- Went into Perfect Games and did the arcade for a bit. Proud to say that I beat my bro at a racing game (he plays racing games quite often at home).
- Got Jimmy Johns for lunch, and Blaze Pizza for dinner (I can get a cheeseless pizza there!). Lots of fast food, but definitely worth it!
- Walked around campus a bit with the fam and looked around before they departed. I showed them some cool buildings and we saw some that I'd never seen before.
- After that, they left for the night, to get on the plane the next day (aka today). That was pretty sad, as that's the last time I'll see them before I get back home. Then again, that'll likely go by as quickly as these five weeks have!
- Did a bit of work (redoing my Klein bottle mainly), then watched some Netflix and went to bed.

Since this post is long enough, I'll save a recap of today for my next post (which will hopefully come tonight!). For now, back to lit review, where I'll likely spend the next couple of hours.

Till then, sayonara*,

Kate

*I had to look up how to spell that

Posted in Uncategorized | 2 Replies

Weekend Recap



Posted on July 5, 2017 by katwell

Hey all! So I haven't posted in a while, so I'm going to do a very quick rundown on the activities of the extended weekend:

Friday:

- Not much to say on Friday. Went back to Freddy, hung out, slept, did a bit of work on our group's outline, and then hung out a bit with some of the gang.

Saturday:

- Emma and I spent a lot of time journeying on Saturday. First we went to the pharmacy, then to Wal-Mart, then to a yummy sub place called Downtown Deli hat was recommended to Emma as the "best sub place in Ames". It actually did live up to the hype, and the sandwiches were really good! I was surprised by how good the veggie sub was, and will definitely go back.
- Saturday night I worked some more on our outline, then took a walk around Freddy before heading to bed. All I can say is that the newer ones, while far, are super nice inside.

Sunday:

- I got up around 10, and my group decided to meet at 12:30, so I did a quick sketch after making breakfast and then headed over to the VRAC.
- Our meeting ran a bit long – 3 hours, to be precise. It was really productive, though, and we got a lot done!
- Then, at 3:30, dun dun dun...my family came!! Yep, they came up for the weekend to see me for 4th of July. I'd been excited for awhile, and was happy to see them.
- They were pretty tired, so we didn't do a whole lot. We got Burgee's coffee and tea, then I gave them a campus tour, then we went to an Irish pub for dinner. The food was pretty good, and it was pretty fun talking and hearing what they'd been up to.
- They then dropped me off at Freddy for the night, as I had a meeting the next day.
- I then played a couple games of Uno with Emma, Sofia, Sushi, and Olivia (from one of the other REUs). To be precise, we played two games. And it lasted 2 and a half hours. I only have one thing to say: Seattle rules.
- I then (finally) went to bed at the wonderful hour of 1 am, with the meeting at 9 the next morning. Still got a decent amount of sleep, but still.

I'm actually going to split this into two posts, with the other one coming later today (should've known I couldn't fit it all into one post!).

So with more to come, I will say bye for now!

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Meetings galore!



Posted on June 28, 2017 by katwell

Hello everyone! Kate here, to post about Deeper Dives, Mathematica, and meetings!

For some context, our group was in some sort of meeting for 7 hours total yesterday. We had our morning meeting, the follow-up with Jamiahus and Quinn, the luncheon lecture, the ALC meeting, and our own group meeting where we looked at some documents and planned out our schedule for the next couple weeks, including deadlines we set for ourselves.

So yeah, lots of time spent in the conference room and talking to people. Which was really helpful, but did prompt a need to recharge a bit. After the workday was finished, the group took time to make dinner (I went to get a quick bubble tea) and then sat down to watch Moana. It was the first time a lot of us had seen it, and I definitely want to see it again.



*For those of you
who haven't
heard of it/seen
it, here's a
reference*

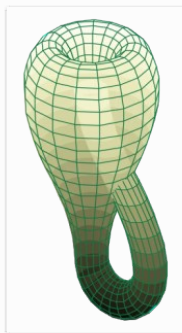
After we finished the movie, Natalie, Emma and I went back to our room. I was still hungry, so I made some ramen with Old Bay. Highly recommend! It was the first time I'd tried it, and it might become a staple. Also, Emma really liked the Old Bay, which is promising for the future.

After that, I Facetimed a friend and went to bed soon after. So a fairly nice, relaxing day overall!

Today so far has been pretty good as well! At our Deeper Dive today, Alex spent some time going over more of the inner workings of the printer and the printing software/UI. He also answered questions we had about the process,



settings, etc.



A Klein bottle

For our Major Course Activity, I think I'm going to print out a mathematical model of some sort. The most difficult part about that will likely be learning how to use Mathematica and convert whatever solid is generated to an STL format. The other difficult thing will be figuring out which model to use. Alex mentioned the possibility of combining a Klein bottle and a Mobius strip, but I have no idea how to do that thus far, so we will see!

Anyway, that's about all I have for today! Kept it under 400 words, which is a small miracle. Even had a couple pictures to boot!

Until next update,

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Long Post



Posted on June 27, 2017 by katwell

Hey all! So I haven't written a full on post since Saturday, so I figured I'd keep my goals realistic for this one and call it what it will likely be: a long post. With that in mind, I'm going to start!

Also, quick protip for those here at the 3-4 o' clock hour: freshman orientation has some good cookies and serves Caribou coffee!

Anyway, after that quick fun fact: back to work! Admittedly there's not much else to talk about, as my team and I spent awhile designing our prototype and familiarizing ourselves with Axure. Good news: today at our meeting, we got really good feedback and he members of the lab had a lot of nice things to say about our design. There's still a lot to do, of course, including outline our paper a bit based specifically on the CHI 2018 template.

Here are a couple other basic things we learned about how to proceed:

- Both digital and paper methods are good for our project, but paper is better to present at meetings and to get feedback on
- Keep the basic functions and system requirements in mind more than the programs themselves; don't get boxed in by the existing software
- Design like there are no limits; let other members of the lab give feedback on what's possible and what's not, and don't let thoughts about constraints inhibit the initial brainstorming process
- Meet with Hesham and Lakshay (who are working on UI and developing, respectively) to gain feedback during our group meetings about what is possible. To that end, plan he nxt meeting during the current meeting.
- Practice agile design
- Rehearse presentations at least a little bit in advance – "tell a story"

There were many other things we learned, of course, and many things specific to our design, but these are some of the overarching things.

Beyond that, we listened to a talk by Veronica Dark about cognitive science and the difference between perception and reality (a couple of you might have a laugh at that one). It was pretty cool, and showed how our expectations influence what we process and remember. It was also interesting from a UI perspective – how what the user is told and shown affects his or her level of confidence and memory when using an interface.

Beyond all that we've learned over the past couple days – in Axure, about prototyping and design, and in our Deeper Dives – I've

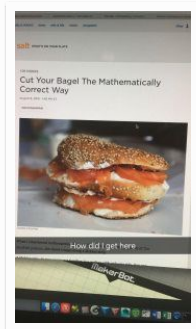
also learned something about myself that I've been learning throughout this REU. And that is that I love organization.

Some of you who know me outside of work might laugh at this. No, I'm not always the most neat person in the world, and I can be pretty scattered in day-to-day life, but in the workplace and when working on a big project, I really enjoy keeping everything in order. For instance, in our Drive folder, everything is organized within this folder via their own folders. In addition, my lab notebook is really helping me do things like plan out scheduling, set to-do's, make concept maps, keep track of questions, etc. Back in high school, I really enjoyed creating outlines as a study method, so this probably shouldn't come as a surprise, but I really enjoy organizing information and planning things. It helps me keep everything straight in my head and makes accomplishing a task so much easier.

Anyway, that was a pretty interesting revelation that I've come to. Since this is getting really long, I'll stop here and (maybe) write another post later relating to Deeper Dives and other things.

At least I warned you!

Kate



*What happens when
you spend enough time
in front of a screen*

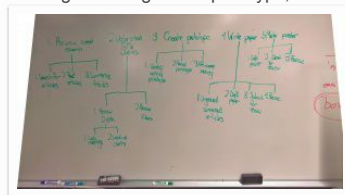
Posted in Uncategorized | [Leave a reply](#)

HCI Project Analysis



Posted on June 26, 2017 by katwell

Hey all! So our group spent a decent amount of time tonight working on our prototype, and we also spent some time working on our



affinity diagram! So, without further ado, I present:

In order to make this diagram, I brainstormed the initial overarching steps and wrote them out on the board, pitching in here and there for some of the other details.

That's about it for tonight, have a goodnight y'all!

Kate

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

Fun Start to the Weekend



Posted on June 24, 2017 by katwell

Hey all! Kate here. About to tell you about the fun, if not overly productive, weekend I've had to far. Also will reassure you that it will be much more productive once this post is finished (promise!).

After work yesterday, a bunch of us piled into Jameel's and Austin's cars to head down to Des Moines for a music festival. Jameel's car had Emmanuel, Sofia, Natalie, Devi and I, and we decided to stop for dinner along the way. As the first two places we tried has long waits, we opted for a place called Reed's Hollow. The first thing the server told us when we were seated was that they had a very good relationship with the local farmers, and that they took what the farmers didn't want and made great things out of it. We were a bit nervous then, and then we saw the menu. There wasn't a lot of vegetarian stuff without cheese and eggs (I know, a tall order), so I opted for something called Tiny Vegetables, which included the appetizing-sounding Tomato Ice and Fried Dirt. I also tried the curly beet fries, which were really good! Seriously, completely recommend. If I'm not too lazy, I might try that at home as a substitute for French Fries at some point.

Anyway, I got what looked like a potted plant (which I believe was the intended effect). This plant included four whole radishes, leaves and all, on top of a mix of a custard-looking sauce with brown specks on it, which was the fried dirt. I'd already cleared up with the server that this wasn't actual dirt, but it was still interesting. In addition, there were a couple other veggies (celery questionmark) mixed in on the bottom. I wasn't much for the sauce, but if I'd liked that I'm sure I would have liked the dish more. As it was, though, the beet fries were good!

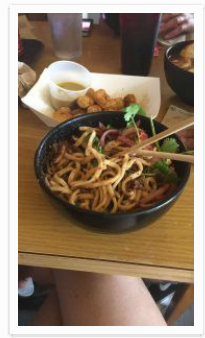


By the time we got to the music fest, it was around 8:30 and the performance had been going on for half

and hour. It was pretty fun when we got there, though, and the music was pretty good. I would've picked a different song for their closing number (aka the one a couple songs before), but other than that I enjoyed it! It was nice to hear live music, and I didn't think I'd get a chance to do that while I was here!



This morning, we went back down to Des Moines for the Art Festival, which was equally fun! The food was good, the art was interesting to look at (to say the least!), and I got to take some pictures of cool cars! Also, it was fun to walk in the sculpture garden again.



Much better than Tiny Vegetables

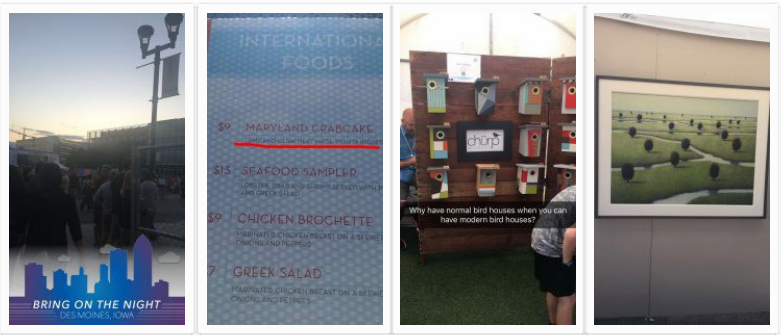
After that we went to a really yummy Korean place called Krunkwich Ramen House. It wiped away any memory of Tiny Vegetables, and, bonus, they had a pretty large vegan menu! So, all in all, it was a great meal, and the car ride back was pretty fun.

So there you have it! After all that, we went back and I took a nap until 7:30. Once I finish this post and eat some of Alfredo's apple cobbler, I'll do some lit review and then maybe call it a day!

Until tomorrow,

Kate

Below are some more pics from the arts and music festival:



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

Prototyping Galore!

1

Posted on June 23, 2017 by katwell

Today I probably won't go into a lot of detail but I'm going to talk a bit about Sofia's and my meeting with Dr. Gilbert, Jamiahus, and Quinn. During the meeting, we got a chance to present our sketches. We set up this meeting specifically because the three of us all had really good ideas in each of our sketches and there were a bunch of different directions we could take when combining them. Since Chris is in Alabama for the weekend, Sofia and I presented his as well, especially highlighting his map layering idea.

They really liked our designs and agreed that there were multiple directions in which we could take our design – mainly related to how much we want to integrate their initial programs with our UI design or, on the flipside, develop our own. The goal would be to eventually get the TIMs adjusted to new, more efficient programs, but we are currently decided how significant of an initial change we want to make.

So this weekend, in addition to the fun things we'll be doing in Des Moines, will also be a lot of lit review and prototyping. We were given until Tuesday to deliver a prototype, whether this is digital or on paper (it's up to us at this point). I think I'm going to play around with Axure a bit and see if I can do a quick mock-up (not sure how good it'll be but we'll see!)

In regards to lit review, Anna gave us information on finding relevant articles for our project and making sure that they are relevant. This should make our lit review process a lot smoother and more successful, which of course will be really nice.

Not much happened yesterday evening outside of work. We went to a cookout in Freddy at 7, and Emma and I came out again later for the sole purpose of getting s'mores. I ended up taking a couple pictures of the lightning, then heading back in. Needless to say, it was an early night yesterday, which was nice!

I think with that I will wrap up for now! Will probably be back in the VRAC at some point to use Axure some more and develop some sort of mockup (which will of course be completely subject to change).

Also I'll write more about our deeper dive in 3-D printing later, since we have another class on it at 2!

Wishing everyone a happy Friday,

Kate

Also for anyone interested, here's a link to one of the sketches I made!

[Monitor 1 \(First Draft\)_20170623134252](#)

Posted in Uncategorized | 1 Reply

Biofuels, UI, and more UI!

1

Posted on June 22, 2017 by katwell

Hello all, I am back! Going to turn out a quick post before I get back to sketching what will be sketch #2 before we come up with a group first draft.

So yesterday, we were working on Unity some more, during which time my feelings about Unity oscillated once again. I was from stage 4 to stage 5 as written in Sofia's blog post throughout that session, which meant that I alternated at all times between wanting to throw my computer across the room and feeling as though I had finally gotten it down. I'll definitely practice Unity on my own though, which I also want to do with Solidworks and Maya (although that will be fairly easy considering I'm in the 3-D printing workshop, my first choice!).

After that, I went with Natalie to a speaking session in Des Moines on UX (user experience) with Stephen, Alec, and Melynda. It was pretty cool to see so many people from industry, and it was a very laid back kind of setting, which was nice. It was also a cool networking opportunity. The topic was very broad, but they had a bunch of book recommendations, one of which is free and which I will have to take a look at online.

The REU also went to a lecture at lunch yesterday, which was about a very specific topic – the research of Mary Stills. This mainly was comprised of whether humans can effectively measure actions which are intuitive to them, and which questionnaires can best measure intuitiveness of a user interface. It was interesting, and gave us an idea of some of the better measures of intuitiveness out there.

This morning, my group worked on sketching and looked at more videos from the TIMs. Thus far I have one full sketch and am working on a second. If I can do a third before we meet to discuss our prototype, I will attempt to do that, but we will see!

For lunch today, we listened to Dr. Mark Mba-Wright talk about biofuels and renewable energy. As I'm really interested in environmental science and renewables (it was what initially motivated me to go into STEM), I really enjoyed this talk and felt like I learned a lot. In the East Coast, biofuels aren't discussed as much as solar, wind and geothermal energy, so it was pretty cool to hear more about them and about the different solutions to some of the problems related to this type of energy.

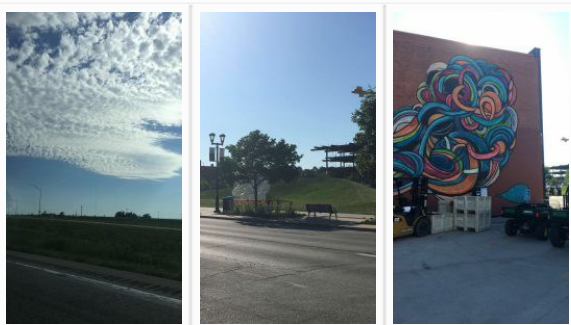
TIMELI is planning on meeting later today to finalize our first prototype, so that'll be exciting. This will be our group's first big collaboration, and the first time we've had to come to any sort of big consensus, so I'm excited to see how that goes (hopefully better than picking our shirts was!).

With that, I will get back to prototyping and sketching and all of that fun stuff. I hope that everyone has a good week, and that Friday comes quickly!

Ciao,

Kate

More pics from Des Moines:

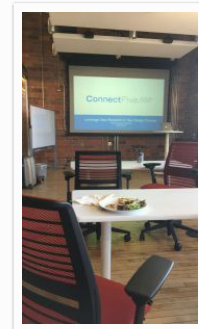


Posted in Uncategorized | 1 Reply

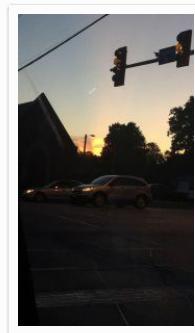
Spit, Coffee, and Prototyping

4

Posted on June 21, 2017 by katwell



*Fun fact: The
cheesecake bites were
delicious!*



*Sunset on the longest
day of the year*

Hello all! This will hopefully be short, although you notice I'm not making any promises anymore about that.

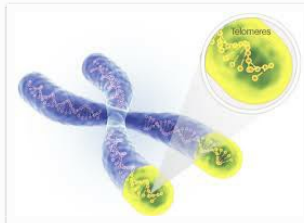
Mainly this is to talk about the luncheon lecture yesterday and where our team is at in terms of designing our UI.

I was lucky enough to have time (barely) yesterday morning to grab a spiffy new lab notebook. I figured I'll use my regular notebook for general notes and my lab notebook for notes more specific to my project. I've already jotted down around 20 pages of notes (we were very productive yesterday) and I'm sure there will be more to come.

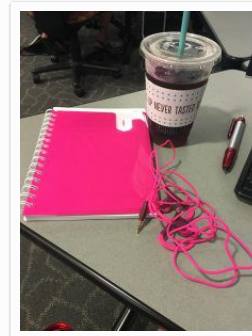
In terms of sketching, I probably need to do a bit more of it. Thus far, I've only made one sketch, although I have a few ideas I have yet to put on paper.

By Friday, we have to have an initial group prototype figured out for our first UI design, so I'll probably work a lot on that tonight, maybe in the library or the community center. Whatever's open, I suppose.

As to where the "spit" part of this title comes in: yesterday, we talked with Birdie Shirtcliff, who studies the effects of stress hormones on the body. And what better way to measure stress hormones than through saliva? Since I took AP Bio a little more than a year ago, it was still pretty fresh in my mind, so it was pretty easy to understand. She talked about the effects of stress on a person's telomeres (parts on the end of one's chromosome that give it structure and shorten as we age). It was pretty interesting, and she talked about how what happens in our life affects us at a physiological level (things like getting nurtured as a child, growing up in poverty, and discrimination all affect our cells). It was really cool, and I recommend looking up her work!



Quick drawing of a telomere



Look at that color coordination!

As to where the coffee comes in? Not very much, I just got a really good coffee this morning and wanted to share (perks of leaving early).

Anyway, that is it for today! Now back to Unity round 2!

Wish me luck,

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | 4 Replies

Unity et al.

Posted on June 20, 2017 by katwell

Oops, meant to post last night but didn't have a good window of time to do so.

This post is going to be mainly about our lunch with Stephen, developments in our project, and, of course, Unity.

I'm going to start out by saying that I initially really liked Unity. That is, when I was simply doing the roll-a-ball and had the instructions right in front of me. It was a bit more difficult to figure out the proper functions and syntax when doing it on my own. And by a bit more difficult, I mean a lot. I'm definitely going to put in some practice after I finish this post.

TIMELI had lunch with Stephen yesterday, which was really nice. The pizza was good, as was the garlic sauce, and by the end we definitely felt a lot more clarity on our project. I also liked talking to Stephen and getting to know him more. Overall, it was very productive, and I may have to look into buying that Getting Things Done book.

In terms of our project, I think I'm going to buy a composition book so I can jot down what I've learned from lit review, what I know about the TIMs, and any general helpful information. We have a lot of information on our Google folder, but I'd like something for personal reference as well.

Other than that, I'm mostly going to be spending today examining the materials about TIMs and their responsibilities, and maybe play around a bit more with the software we are going to use to design the interface. We'll see how that goes, but hopefully it'll go well. If I have time afterwards, I will do (dun dun dun) more lit review!

That is all for now. Actually kept my post short this time (and I didn't even promise it).

Signing off,

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Beginning of Week 4!

Posted on June 19, 2017 by katwell

Hey all! Kate here, again, for another 48 hour-long post! Will try to keep it short (I should really stop promising that).

Yesterday was a pretty chill day. Sofia and I went out to mass, me for the first time. Afterwards, we got (surprise, surprise) bubble tea. I had a delicious flavor called Wintermelon Roasted, which I recommend to anyone who goes and is looking to try something new. I'm not a huge green tea person and even I really enjoyed it!

Also, we had lunch with Stephen today and he mentioned the amount of bubble tea posts on our blogs. Oops, here's one more! I promise I'll write about work-related stuff too

We also went into Barefoot, the campus store with corn shirts, as it has \$15 tank tops right now. We both got a really cute corn-related tank top and I got a nice pair of shorts as well.

Afterwards, we both went back to do some meal prep for the week. I also decided, partially due to a burst of nostalgia, to make a black bean salad, as my family makes that a lot for parties at home. We had almost all of the ingredients, except for lime juice, and Emma needed cottage cheese for lasagna, so I made a Wal-Mart run. It was successful, and I got a couple other things as well. Probably not going to bike to that Wal-Mart again, though.

After the Wal-Mart run and the subsequent making of bean salad, I sat around for a bit then went to the library with Sofia. We worked for about an hour, then I came back and helped Emma and Natalie set up our dinner for everyone.

This dinner was pretty fancy, involving lasagna, the bean salad, kale chips made by Sofia, and a vegetable platter. We also added chips and ranch dressing to boot.

After that, eight of us (questionmark) piled into two cars to watch Wonder Woman at 10:30 pm. The actual movie started around 11, and ended a little after 1 am. I totally recommend it for anyone who hasn't seen it, it was amazing! Seriously, go see it. You don't need to have seen any of the other DC movies in order to understand it by any stretch, it works great as a stand-alone.

This morning, I got up at 8 (I planned it out accordingly, I knew I wasn't getting up beforehand). After that, we started with Unity, and that is where I will end my post. As usual, I ran out of room, so I'll write about more work and class-related information in a separate post.

(This is what happens when I try to write 2 day long posts!)

Adieu,

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

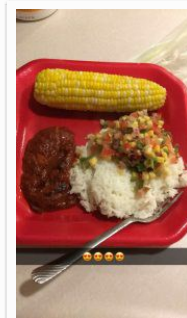
Past Two Days

Posted on June 17, 2017 by katwell

Didn't get to post yesterday, oops! TIMELI was too busy exploring the TMC and learning cool stuff (not to brag or anything!).

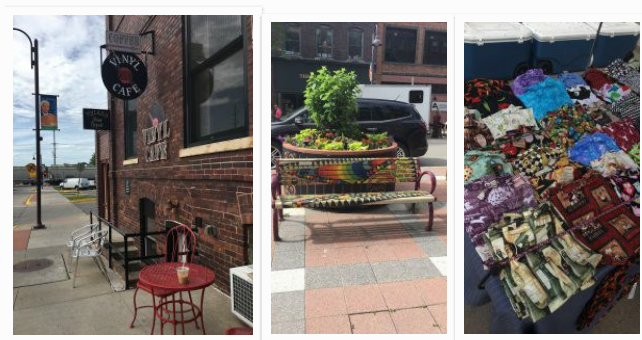
Anyway, a lot has happened in the past 48 hours. To give a (hopefully) quick rundown:

- Sofia and I killed it in the VRAC after hours doing Solidworks tutorials
- We also killed it on the climbing wall, getting to the top three times
- Solidworks class continued to be interesting, I made a candlestick (no, Jack, not a bong) and we got to try our hands at assembling a contraption 3-D printed by Alex
- Sofia, Chris, and I went to the TMC during blog time yesterday to take a look at how the traffic incident managers operate on a day-to-day basis. It helped us a lot with understanding and being able to visualize their duties. On the way back we started stalking people via the White Pages.
- Emma made wonderful tomato stew, corn, and rice. She also made chicken, which I assume was wonderful as well.
- Devi, Emma, Brittney, Sofia, Masashi, Austin, Emmanuel, Alfredo and I played a pretty great game (or games) of Fibbage. My aliases included Fun Fact, But Actually, Hecks Yeah and Maya.
- Masashi found his fidget spinner
- During this time we tried to make ice cream, but it was a tad unsuccessful. Austin, Emma, Masashi, Alfredo and I therefore went out after midnight to get some ice cream from Wal-Mart. We then went back to our rooms, and I don't know about the rest of them but Emma and I ended up not eating any that night.
- Also, during this time, I tried to balance ranch on top of my ice cream while carrying my groceries. It didn't work out too well. On the upside, I was a good citizen and reported it (although did I pay for it? Nope).
- Sofia, Brittney, Masashi, Emmanuel, Alfredo, Chris, Natalie, and I went to the farmers' market today. It was really cool, and awesome pictures were taken despite the weather!
- Sofia, Masashi, Emmanuel, Alfredo, Natalie and I decided to go back out to Wal-Mart to get a few (?) more things. Masashi then proposed using the grill tonight, so our already extensive list of groceries grew a little bit. Needless to say, the bus ride back was a bit difficult, as was getting to the bus stop. We had a couple of bag tears, many of which occurred while we were crossing the road (perfect timing, I know).
- Emma and I decided to go to the VRAC to get some work done, and then promptly went outside, saw that it was raining, and went back in. We'll go tomorrow!
- Speaking of the rain, hoping it clears up for tonight. None of us checked the weather before deciding to grill tonight, so we'll see!

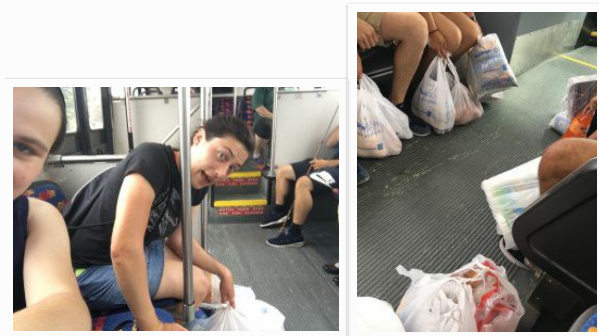


That's about it for today's post! Currently I'm sitting on the couch in our apartment, about to look at research articles or maybe practice C++ or Solidworks! Or maybe just eat, who knows?

Hope that everyone has a sensational Saturday!



Cool pics from the farmers' market



Not even close to all the groceries we came back with

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

Pros and *Corns* List

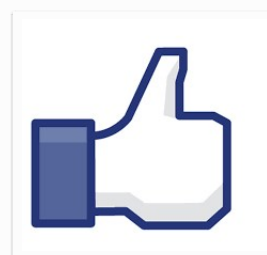
Posted on June 15, 2017 by katwell

So, as promised on my post yesterday, I am going to post a pros and cons list of recent events, or as I'm going to call it, a pros and coms list. I might do one of these every couple weeks, as I feel like it's a nice summary. Plus, of course, it's quick.

So, without further ado...

Pros:

- I have a tan! A bit, anyway. Not quite as pale as in the group photo
- The sunsets are really pretty here when there's clouds in the sky
- Most of the time, it's not all that humid here (thus far anyway).
- Bubble tea!!!
- Corn shirts
- The campus itself is really pretty
- My bike has not yet broken or been stolen
- The art on campus and in Main Street
- Cy is a pretty cool mascot
- Getting the hang of Maya
- Actually really liking Solidworks
- C++ is fun to learn
- The people are pretty cool, I guess
- Getting lost leads to adventures in pretty fields
- Lots of photo ops!
- Not too crowded
- People are pretty friendly
- Caribou Coffee
- Lots of room for exploration on campus
- I'm getting better at asking questions
- My family is reading my blog!



Cons:

- The tan in question is a farmer's tan (fitting, I suppose)
- LOTS of construction
- The bubble tea place has been out of honey pearls for awhile (although according to Angelica, the yogurt boba are good)
- Feeling super behind on research, despite reading papers as often as possible
- Low energy after the workday



- Corn shirts and bubble tea are expensive
- Buying groceries
- The heat
- The humidity of the past couple days
- We still don't know how to play Secret Hitler
- Still haven't explored all of campus
- Everything here closes at 9 or 10 (throwing it back to Frederick in that sense)
- Unfamiliar territory

That last one's just a catch-all, referring to location, research, and environment all in one. It's becoming more familiar, though, and has also led to a lot of cool discoveries and adventures. So, in a way, it's a good thing as well!

So yeah, a pretty solid list. Not too many "corns", and most of them are pretty minor (also, I had to kind of hunt for them, as you can probably tell). In general, I've really enjoyed my first two full weeks here and hope that the enjoyment continues!

Oops. This was actually a pretty long post. It has some nice text and pictures, though, so hopefully it's not too bad to read!

With that, I will bid farewell for today, and get back to – dun dun dun – lit review!

Hope you all have a thrilling Thursday,

Kate

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

Update to previous post

6

Posted on June 14, 2017 by katwell

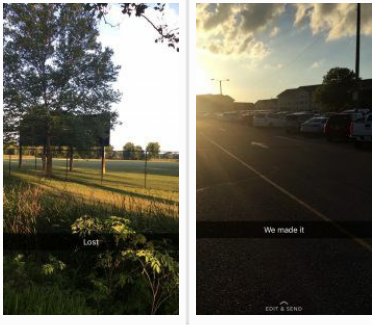
That last post was a bit of a downer so I thought I'd add a more lighthearted part 2! Also despite some unfortunate setbacks (which I'll get to in a minute) the past couple hours have been a lot better than the previous.

For one thing, I'm really liking Solidworks (what I've seen thus far, that is). I liked Alex's teaching method and will definitely look at those tutorials in Solidworks (partly because we're required to, of course, but it's also interesting!). Also it's a lot more structured than Maya which I really like! Maybe it's the J in me (see Myers Briggs).

For another, it was nice to be outside on such a beautiful (if disgustingly humid) day! Emma might disagree with that one – she was too busy trying to get back to Freddy. Again, I'll get there in a minute.

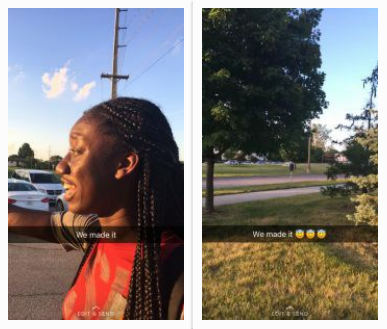
So we went downtown today to look at the shops and get CVS and Subway. We then almost caught the blue bus back to Freddy, and as a result decided to walk back. This was probably a mistake – we were okay until we hit the College of Business building (this is what we get for wandering outside our lane apparently).

Somehow, we got to the east side of campus. No idea how. We were eventually able to take a road that cut back into Freddy, but the first building we saw was #81. So we had to walk a ways, but it wasn't as bad as we thought. And, bless, we got back to our building



in one piece (I'm being dramatic, it wasn't too bad, just gross and humid).

The second and the third pictures are when we thought we made it back (little did we know how far we had yet to go)



On the plus side, the campus was really pretty. And I'll definitely be able to get to sleep pretty easily tonight!

Looking forward to being able to research tomorrow and play around a bit more with Maya and Solidworks!

UPDATE: Emma and I heard a knock on our door and opened it to Sushi telling us to go outside. I had to grab my key, and when I

came out all I saw was what looked like shaving cream being tossed in the air. Turns out, it was a game involving putting a dollop of whipped cream on your forearm, bringing up that arm to smack against your other arm, letting the whipped cream fly up and catching it with your mouth. Once I succeeded in getting the whipped cream to fly up I wasn't too bad at it!

So yeah, with that is the official end of my blog post. Probably won't have a lot to write about tomorrow but that's okay, maybe I'll take a leaf out of Natalie's book and write a pros and cons list (or a pros and "corns" list).

Au Revoir,

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | 6 Replies

Frustration, Failure, and...Fun?

Posted on June 14, 2017 by katwell

Interesting title, I know, but the past 24 hours have been a bit of a low. It ended okay, though, at least for now (until we start Solidworks anyway!)



One of the creations – I drew the blue sort-of shield

Light painting was pretty fun, although we definitely took a while to get the hang of it. Natalie, Austin and I made a pretty great Mario and Natalie and I made a nice cornstalk. Also, Sofia and I got into a fake lightsaber duel with lightsabers drawn by Chris (on an unrelated note, WordPress apparently doesn't like the word "lightsaber").

Afterwards, Emma and I went downtown in order to get paper towels, snacks, and utensils. We then made our standard bubble tea run, where I go the old standby and the first tea I ever tried there, the Thai tea (sadly, there were still no honey pearls).

Also, fun fact, my contact lens split in half yesterday! The first in a series of unfortunate events from this time period.

We then took the bus north to Pearle Vision to get a new nosepiece for Emma. She ended up needing two so it would be even, and they ended up charging her \$5.00 for it (yeah, a total ripoff).

Then we got back to Freddy, and I was pretty exhausted after that, so much so that I didn't retrieve my bike from the VRAC (which ended up being a good thing, as it rained too hard to bike here this morning but now my bike is here for the ride back).

Then, after lying around for a bit and eating a "dinner" of chips and salsa (what can I say, I'm lazy) I went to do my work on my laptop. And that's when disaster struck.

My laptop was swarming with ants.

Yeah, fun stuff. I took a closer look and ants had definitely gotten into my room, meaning that I had to go back out and get some Raid in order to prevent an infestation. In the meantime I couldn't use my laptop, since ants kept crawling out (there went practicing Maya that night). Jameel was there at the time, talking to Natalie about their IRB application, and he offered to drive me to Wal-Mart later that night. When Masashi came back to the apartments, the three of them had their group meeting and then Jameel and I went to Wal-Mart around midnight. It was surprisingly fun, and Wal-Mart is definitely less crowded during the 12 o'clock hour. Afterwards, I got McDonald's fries and we headed back to campus.



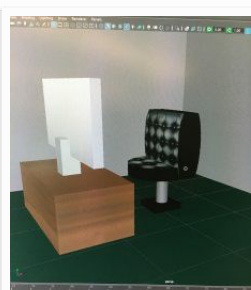
Freddy has a pretty bad ant problem right now

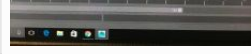
Then this morning, of course, I was defeated by Maya. Figuring out the layers and textures was a pain, and it took me about an hour to make a very interesting-looking chair and a small computer with no keyboard. Currently trying to finagle the texture on my roof, but I think I'm starting to get the hang of it now. I sort of know what to do now, I think (of course, Solidworks is yet to come). I was actually starting to get into it right before lunchtime, but who knows, maybe Maya will decide to work on my laptop (assuming it stops crawling with bugs)!

Anyway, that's it for now! Things are (hopefully) looking up, and maybe tonight I can get some rest and some work done!

Hoping for a better 24 hours to come,

Kate





No joke, I spent over an hour on this chair



Going okay, besides the crazily textured roof

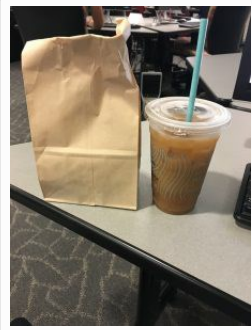
Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Short Post

4

Posted on June 13, 2017 by katwell

Didn't know what else to call this, and I assume it's not going to be super long unless something drastic happens, so here we go!



Got some Caribou Coffee again this morning with Natalie (2 for 5 Tuesdays)! For those of you familiar with Starbucks, I doctored up a mock sweet cream cold brew. It was really good, highly recommend! Maybe I should be a barista...

Welp, the REU lab space is almost empty right now. The other three groups are in meetings, but our group's meeting was this morning so we spent time with Quinn, the undergraduate coding a lot of the information for our project, looking at videos.

And wow, TIMs (traffic incident managers) do a lot! They're pretty much constantly multi-tasking and have a bunch of different programs up at each time. Often they'll have more than one program up on each monitor (they have three monitors total). Watching them, especially sped up, is definitely disorienting.

Anyway, back to other stuff that happened yesterday and today. To be honest, like I said before, not a lot happened. Well, we almost set off the smoke alarm in our room and had to get the doorstop from Alfredo, Austin and Sushi's room in order to clear it out (we have yet to give it back to them). Also, we ran out of forks, so we went across the hall and Devi graciously lent out a couple (they have nice metal ones in their apartment). Later, there was a bug in our bathroom and Emma got Chris to kill it (thanks Christ!). So, all in all, we asked almost the entire REU for help yesterday. Yep, adulting like pros.

Other than that, though, it was fairly uneventful, which was kind of nice.

Natalie and I biked back to Freddy (if you're walking around campus and you hear someone squeaking behind you, you know who to look for), Emma made rice, and the three of us went outside that evening to read our research papers (the temp dropped down to a cool 77 degrees). Then we came back inside, I outed myself to Emma as being country (she's called me a redneck ever since she found out about my county's unfortunate moniker, Fredneck), and we went to bed. Between that we had a lot of difficulties (getting a text about a huge bug in the bathroom was interesting) but we made it through! Of course, I vowed to go to bed early and ended up going to bed at 11, but hey, that's still around 7 hours of sleep!

Other than all that, it was a pretty chill day. Read a paper, ate dinner, called my mom, went to bed. Definitely easy, and something I needed!

Well, gotta get back to research, so I'll do that now. We're going to be light painting tonight, so I'll provide an update on that tomorrow!

Have a terrific Tuesday (this time, I swear I got my day right!),

Kate

Update: I'm never pre-emptively calling my posts "short" again



After a long day at work, it was nice to open the fridge and remember that I had four chocolates waiting for me!



So I know I commented my agreement on Natalie's post that the sunsets here are disappointing, but I have to concede to Jameel that this one was pretty nice. Maybe that's because there were actually clouds in the sky yesterday!

Posted in Uncategorized | 4 Replies

Mello Milk, Pancake-Salsa Sandwiches, and More!

4

Posted on June 12, 2017 by katwell

Hello all! It's Monday and the first workday of week 3! This week we're learning Maya and Solidworks, hopefully finalizing our problem area paragraph, reading and discussing an article about sexism and gaming, and, of course, continuing to read for our projects!



*Alfredo about to eat his
salsa-filled pancake*

Of course, there are lots of crazy distractions. For instance, last night Alfredo, Austin and Sushi invited us over for some pancakes, chicken, cookies, and ghost pepper salsa – not all at the same time, of course (unless you're Chris). Milk guzzling and a smoke alarm almost going off ensued, but everything turned out fine! Props to Alfredo for the pancakes, they were really good!

After that, Austin, Sushi, Emma, Emmanuel and I watched – wait for it – more YouTube. If you haven't watched Bert Kreischer's The Machine, you should watch it.

Today has been just as interesting thus far. I finally got my bike yesterday, and since I haven't had a chance to grab a lock it's currently sitting in the VRAC. The bike itself is a bit squeaky when someone pedals, but other than that it works perfectly!

Unfortunately, although I got to the VRAC at 8:10, I decided to bike to Caribou, and got lost a couple of times (oops). Got back here around 8:40, though, so still plenty of time before class started (and the peach tea I got was amazing).

Not gonna lie, class was pretty frustrating today. I haven't gotten the hang of Maya, and I'll definitely need more practice.

At lunch today, I was describing a concoction that a couple people from my school made (if you're from UMBC and reading this you probably know what I'm talking about) to Emmanuel, Sofia, Chris, Sushi, and Austin. The concoction was called mountain milk (aka Mountain Dew and chocolate milk combined) and I had tried it a couple of times and not hated it. I may have even gotten it for myself once or twice, I can't remember.

Unfortunately, I hadn't tasted it since then, and don't remember entirely how it tastes or whether I'd like it now. Since ISU is a Coke school, there was no Mountain Dew at UDCC. Austin and his friends had tried something similar, though, with chocolate milk and Mello Yello. Thus, Mello Milk was born.

Actually, I was the only one who would try it. And try it I did, even after the weird chemical reaction that took place (as soon as Austin put a tiny bit of chocolate milk in, the entire thing fluffed up). To me, it tasted like a Tootsie Pop. It wasn't terrible, but the texture was a little weird.

Anyway, I should probably finish designing my awful tree in Maya (and doing many more scary things)!

Until tomorrow,

Kate

P.S. For anyone interested, here are a couple cool pictures of me on the giant swing yesterday. Thanks to Chris for taking them!



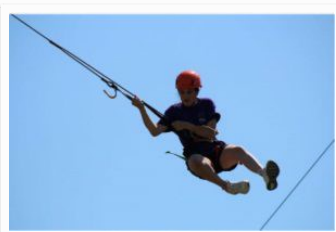
Highly recommend!



Mello Milk in all its glory



Smiling in the face of impending doom



Meeting the impending doom



Successfully met my doom



I don't necessarily need to blog right now, but it's a nice place to do it and I'm feeling in the mood for blogging so I'm going to go ahead!

I woke up at 10:30 this morning, which was really nice! It's the first time I've slept in since I've gotten here, and probably the first time I've gotten 9 hours of sleep. I was really sore from yesterday, but that probably just means I need to work out more! I'll make an effort to go the gym, just not today.

After I got up and took a shower, I went to CVS to get some cleaning supplies (and might have snuck in some bubble tea while I was there). Getting to the bus was a harrowing tale, involving me jaywalk(run)ing and getting there right ahead of the bus. But on the plus side, I made it!

After CVS, I headed up to main street to meet Natalie at the chocolate shop. Unfortunately, I didn't check the bus schedule super well, and ended up attempting to walk the 2 miles to Main Street with my backpack on (I gave up and ended up waiting for the next bus).

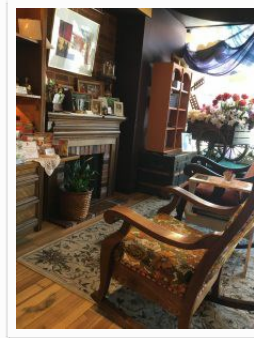
I'm currently sitting in the chocolate shop, where I was able to get a free mint and coffee in addition to the five chocolates I bought. For anyone who wants a nice place to sit, or wants to play on a grand piano in a quiet atmosphere, I would definitely recommend coming here to hang out!

As a bonus, I'm listening to Natalie's wonderful piano playing. I really need to brush up on my piano skills, as I haven't played properly since before college started! Maybe that'll be a goal for the summer, we'll see!

Without much more to say for now, here's a bunch of pictures from Main Street (it's super artsy so there are lots of photo ops!)

Until my next update,

Kate



The shop is really cute and old-fashioned, and a nice work environment! Definitely recommend.



Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Rope-tacular!

1

Posted on June 10, 2017 by katwell

For all those reading this, I am very sorry that I couldn't come up with a better rope-related title. All of that climbing has me *strung* out.

Before we get into the ropes stuff, I'll talk about last night a bit. Since it was Alfredo's birthday, we threw a small party for him which involved takeout, a chicken dance that almost led to disaster, and a perusal of YouTube that culminated in watching Actual Cannibal Shia LaBeouf and the Duck Song. Yep, we went down the rabbit hole.

Anyway, back to the ropes. A bunch of people have probably posted, or are going to post, about this experience, but I'm gonna do it anyway. Who knows, maybe I'll be the first!

So we went on a ropes course today as part of a trust building exercise. The exercises we did included trust falls off of a six foot platform, a giant climbing tower, and a giant swing. I'd done something like this last summer, but this was definitely different enough to be exciting (also, it's just exciting in general).



About the trust fall, because I have some words on that: I was the last one to go, and while the group initially caught me, they sort of dropped me afterwards. It's okay, though, I forgive them (I think).

Sofia and I climbed the tower together, and both successfully made it onto the top platform via the rope hanging from it. It was definitely difficult, but we got through it and have the pictures to boot!

After the ropes course, a bunch of us went grocery shopping, and then



Blatantly stealing a group selfie from Sofia and posting it here



Successful climb!

went to our rooms to recover from a day in the sun. Emma made Natalie and I some awesome stir-fry and brownies (shout out to you, Emma!), and I decided to settle in for the night (hence, this blog post). Might get some work done, or might just relax – we'll see! Might even watch the 10th season of Doctor Who, as Jameel says it's good!

Wishing everyone a stellar Saturday (or what's left of it),

Kate



While I'm on the whole stealing pictures streak, here's a wonderful roommate selfie!

Posted in Uncategorized | 1 Reply

More Hamilton, Corn, etc.

Posted on June 9, 2017 by katwell

So a lot of fun stuff happened over the last 24 hours. Also, oops, just realized I forgot to publish yesterday's post, so anyone I wished a wonderful Wednesday can now have a fabulous Friday (yes, I am aware that yesterday was not Wednesday. Let's just ignore that small fact and move on).



So I have a bunch of cool pictures from yesterday, on the plus side. We had an interesting time picking the shirt design (not gonna lie, we're still working on the most contentious part, aka the colors).\

Emma, Devi, Brittney, Emmanuel, Angelica and I got bubble tea yesterday. Introducing Angelica to TJCups was a success, and she really liked the drink she got.

Also, we watched more Hamilton last night, and added Emma to the crew! Since I didn't see the beginning, and Emma hasn't seen any of it, we watched a bit (which turned into the whole first act, of course). So yeah, more King George, more interesting camera work, all that fun stuff.

Brittany, Emmanuel, Jameel, Emma, Devi, Natalie and I also played some Codenames last night, which was pretty fun. Not sure who was the overall winner – it might have been 50/50, – but it was a good time! Now on to Secret Hitler, when we can figure out how to play it / ask Anna.

In other news, we learned about classes and objects in C++ today, which was interesting if extremely hard to wrap my head around. A bunch of people had experience in object-oriented programming, but I hadn't so it was definitely a challenge. Managed to write my first code in it though, and add inheritance to it. Currently trying to figure out how to finagle header files, so stay tuned!

In other news, Jameel, Alfredo and I went to the ISU dairy farm today for a tour. There were a lot of young kids and their parents, which probably could have been expected. It was fun though, and cool to get to see rural Ames (reminds me of my hometown, for those of you familiar with it)!

Quick shoutout to A) my brothers, for finally reading this blog, B) my friend Gabby, who was able to score Jon Bellion tickets, and C) Alfredo, because it's his 20th birthday!!! Hope it's been fun thus far, work-filled as it's been! Also hope the cake is good!

With that, I'm going to sign off, before I make any new dumb errors. To those confused by my stupid mistakes, I take full responsibility.

Till tomorrow, where you'll hear about the ropes course,

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

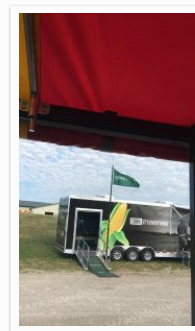
Research kickoff!

Posted on June 9, 2017 by katwell

So this is kind of a lame title, but to be honest that's been a lot of what's been happening. Our group has started a pretty in-depth



Us planning out our shirt



Pretty great corn sighting at the dairy farm

research review, and I think I've finally started to get a handle on the kind of information we're supposed to get from these articles (or maybe that's just the hope).

We started working on the problem paragraph for our research today, which was nice to do. It's nice to have a something concrete that we've worked on and can present to our mentors, but we're definitely going to keep working on it.

On a random but related note: I have a big talent for overthinking emails. I think I asked Sofia three times to review a paragraph-long email, not counting the time I asked her if the subject header was okay.

We're designing our t-shirts today, which should be fun! I have no idea what that entails – are we going to paint them? Order them? Who knows? – but I'm sure whatever we're doing will be fun.

Last night, Brittany and Sofia and I got bubble tea, the two of them for the first time. A bunch of us are planning on going again today, so Emma and I are getting lots of people hooked (slowly converting people one by one). They didn't have pearls there, and they were really apologetic, to the point where Emma and I got a topping on the house. They know us by name there now, which is really nice. It'll definitely be one of the things I'll miss when we leave (then again, we have 8 more weeks here).

After bubble tea, Sofia and I worked on C++ for a bit. Emma gave us one of her projects from her course on Java and told us she could give us some more, so that's exciting. Tonight I think I'm finally going to try and master the basics of object-oriented programming. We touched on it briefly in my computer science courses last semester, but didn't go hugely into it and we didn't get to code any of it ourselves. I tried to look at it a bit online, but I think I need to reserve a chunk of time to fully learn it.

One thing that I've noticed, and my team members and I talked about this a bit earlier, is that every time I'm reading research papers I feel like I should be doing C++ and vice versa, so it's hard to feel productive even when being, well, productive. I discovered they felt the same way, so hopefully that'll be a hurdle we'll all start to get over soon.

Anyway, in order to not make this too long I'm going to bid you all farewell for now! Have a wonderful Wednesday!

Until next time,

Kate

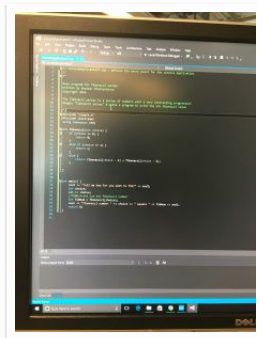
Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

TIMs, Memes, and C++

Posted on June 7, 2017 by katwell

So I promised myself this post wouldn't take 24 hours to write like the last one, so let's get to it!

First off, we learned conditionals in our C++ class today, and I'm proud to say that I successfully coded the Fibonacci sequence in C++! Although we were shown how to code it in my computer science class last semester, they didn't make us code it ourselves, and I wasn't paying a ton of attention to it. In addition, that class was in Python and thus far that's the only language I know, so it was cool to apply it to this.



My beautiful code

Anyway, proud moment aside. On another note, our group chat has reached a milestone that every group chat must at some point reach: we started memeing. One person (Emma) posted a meme, and a bunch more followed. Austin started us on the theme of Italian memes, and we continued from there. There will likely be many more memes to come.

Yesterday, we did the board games, and Brittany, Sofia, Anna and I *crushed* on Codenames, just FYI. We won 2/2 rounds. Tonight we may play Secret Hitler as a group, which should be interesting. It's apparently similar to Werewolf and Mafia.

In other news, I successfully made dinner last night, which was exciting. Also, S/O to Nia'mani, my roommate at UMBC, for getting sucked into the madness that is bubble tea (her mentor got her some today. And let her out four hours early. Crazy, man.)

We took some pictures in our snazzy red polos today. They're pretty great if I do say so myself – complete with balloons and letters (this will make sense eventually). If you want a hint of what's to come, here's a picture of Sofia and I in our polos (also, for those reading this who knew me last semester, my hair has lightened a lil bit since I left).

Oh, fun fact for everyone, I now have Hamilton on my computer! So if anyone's interested in witnessing the magic that is this musical, let me know.

My team got to get a bit of a glimpse into what traffic incident managers (TIMs) use throughout their day. Once we are IRB- approved, we'll be able to see footage of their workdays, which will give us greater context for our project, which will be cool.

In an effort to keep from taking 24 hours to write this post, I'm going to sign off here.

Keep it corny,

Kate

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

First Tuesday!

Posted on June 7, 2017 by katwell



*"KATE THE GREAT
AND I :)" – Sofia*

Hard to believe, but it's our first full Tuesday workday here. Only a week ago I was still on the plane!

It's been a pretty nice day so far. It seems like Tuesdays in general are pretty chill, so that's nice. My group members and I spent the time doing a lit review and learning more C++.

We met the director of the VRAC, Dr. James Oliver, and talked with him about graduate school. I'm planning on emailing him sometime in the next week to ask him a few questions and hopefully get to talk to him a bit more, as I was on the other end of the table and didn't get to have much one-on-one interaction with him.

Later we'll be doing games, so I'll be blogging about that in another entry. For now, I have a query for everyone.

So I'm trying to choose an avatar for WordPress, and being where we are and the kind of setting we're in, I'm going to try and pick one involving both corn and virtual reality. I know, super corny.

So I have a few different options, and I'll display them for you, and if people could comment on their favorite that would be great!

UPDATE: I wasn't finding a lot of images involving both corn and VR and the ones I was finding were slightly disturbing, so I may have to give up on that dream and try another day. We'll see.

With that I'm going to end this segment of the post, with more to come (also if anyone happens to find/Photoshop a nice image of both corn and VR please send it my way!).

*****A few hours later: *****

Our group got a chance to meet with some of the other members of our lab, including one of the PI's (principal investigators). The meeting was a lot to process, but they gave us a lot of assignments and guidance so we're on somewhat solid footing (as much as anyone can be in their first research experience, I suppose) and have a pretty clear idea of how to proceed over this coming week.

Time to cook dinner again tonight! Feeling some veggie stir-fry, may make some of that with the rice noodles I have. Might post some pictures, assuming it goes well, that is.

Woo, it's 5:00! Granted, we're staying here to do board games now, but good to know the official workday is over! After this, I am 100% going back to the apartments to relax (and get a bit of work done, hopefully).

UPDATE: I didn't do a lot of work, oops. I also forgot to post this when I meant to, so it's now Wednesday. I'll do a better, more thorough blog post today!

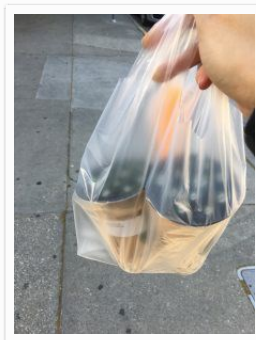
Posted in Uncategorized | [Leave a reply](#)

Post Part 2

1

Posted on June 6, 2017 by katwell

Since I promised a part 2, and someone was eagerly waiting for it (hi, Mom!), I'm going to quickly jot one down. Not much so talk about so it will likely be a quick post, but without further ado, let's get going!



One for the road

So, interesting journey after work was done today. I went to the gym with Devi and Chris, although while they went to the pool I headed to the rock wall. It was a pretty short couple of climbs, as they didn't have the high walls open and I'm not a super experienced climber. After that, I checked out the "buns of steel bridge" and rode on one of the bikes for awhile. I then went to CVS downtown and got more bubble tea (!) including one for the road for Emma (racking up points left and right). After that, I tried to get one of the bikes from VRAC, but discovered the seat was a bit (a lot) too high. Not sure if there was a way to adjust it, but I decided to just forget about it (not super mechanically minded, haha).

After that, I took the brown bus back to Freddy, where, unfortunately, I got off a bit of a ways past the stop mostly due to not paying enough attention. It's okay, though, it was a nice walk.

Made dinner again! It was pretty good, a nice pasta salad. Not a ton of options out there for a vegetarian who doesn't eat cheese and eggs, FYI, but it works out!

Probably going to stop here and report back after the game night, which is in progress now.

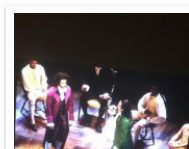
Will add to this once it's over!

UPDATE:

It's a bit late, sure, but that's okay because.

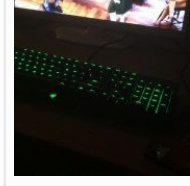
I. SAW. HAMILTON.

Sure, it was a grainy version downloaded off of Youtube, and at times the person working the camera didn't do a perfect job, but that doesn't matter.



BECAUSE WE SAW IT. AND IT WAS AMAZING.

Slight lie there. I actually have to see the first couple of songs, as it had started by the time I came up for game night. I would tell you how it went from game night to Hamilton, but I'm sure that they, aka Emmanuel, Chris, Jameel and Devi, can tell it better.



Cabinet battle

Anyway, we saw it. It was as good as I could have imagined, with amazing staging and wonderful choreography. The symbolism throughout the musical is even more apparent when you see it for yourself than when you're listening to the soundtrack. It was amazing and I can't say any more wonderful things about it. This just makes me more motivated to shell out for a Hippodrome subscription in order to get first pick for the travelling version of the show. Yes, it's a bit costly, but I'll take advantage of it. It is, after all, a good deal for the amount of shows that take place there per season. Besides, that's what stipends are for, right?

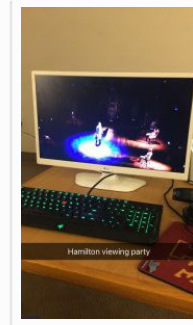
I suppose I could have written about this tomorrow (I mean today) during blog time, but I had to write about it. It was wonderful, highly recommend, even more of an emotional journey than the soundtrack.

I'm having trouble forming coherent thoughts right now, due both to tiredness and excitement, so I'm going to sign off for the night.

Until later today,

Kate

P.S. Quick shoutout to Devi, that was amazing!



Posted in Uncategorized | 1 Reply

They went to class today...what they learned will astonish you!



Posted on June 5, 2017 by katwell

Sorry (but also not sorry) for the clickbait-y title. Running out of title ideas so I thought I'd try something new.

In all actuality, what we learned, while interesting, will most likely not astonish you. Today we learned how to set up a project in Visual Studio, then to run a basic Hello World! project. Along the way, we also learned comments, the reason behind various components, and how to print any phrase to the screen.

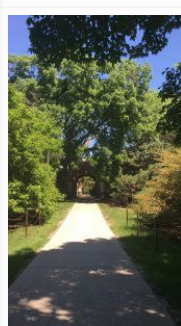
After some frustration, I'd gotten Visual Studio to work the night before, so I learned a lot of the stuff last night. We had a lot of free time to explore, so I found a cool website that has tutorials in a PDF-type of format, which works well for me. [Here](#) is the link for anyone interested.

From there, I learned a lot of the syntax for C++, which was nice, and am currently working on different loops. Apparently C++ can do for loops, a fun fact which I didn't know.

Chris, Sophia and I went to a speaking session afterwards, which had free food and some useful advice (any day where I don't have to use a meal swipe is a good one).

After class, I'll likely go to the gym and try out the rock wall. Hopefully I won't humiliate myself, but we'll see. Maybe that can be my next blog title – "Kate Tries the Rock Wall: Utter Humiliation or Wonderful Success?"

Anyway, since I don't have a lot more to share, I'll likely do a Part 2 tonight. In the meantime, here's some pictures from yesterday that I didn't feel like posting:



The two above images are from a pretty hall I found while on a walk – kind of looked like Hogwarts



These two items were from the store Emma and I went to yesterday, Ragstock. To be clear, I did not buy the stealth flask nor did I buy the cat shirt. Not sure how drinking from a bottle of sunscreen would be considered “stealthy” anyway. Fun fact, I did have to show an ID before making my purchase.



A cool little free library I found, containing exactly one book.

Anyway, will write a part 2 later (don't worry, it won't be huge) and for now, will bid adieu. Until next time (aka tonight)!

Kate

P.S. got under 400 words! Maybe it doesn't count, since it's a one-parter, but there you go!

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

Water balloons, spoons, Wal-Mart, and much more



Posted on June 4, 2017 by katwell

Time to write, as per usual. We don't necessarily have to blog on the weekends but I've kind of enjoyed it thus far and if I don't blog today, I'll have a bunch of stuff to blog about tomorrow.

So for the sake of time, I'll just give the highlights. Due to my general laziness, there may be no pictures this time around.

1. So we did yard work today. Emma, Chris and I did anyway. As part of an agreement with a local shop which refurbished bikes, we were able to have bikes from them in exchange for our time. The three of us were assigned the task of planting raspberry plants, twenty five total. The area was a bit rocky, so this was a bit of a challenge, but after about an hour we were finished. It was a bit hot outside, around 90, but without humidity at least. We were definitely ready to be done with it, though, although we'll be back for our bikes.
2. After that, Emma and I headed to the mall. It was pretty nice with a couple of cool stores, including one called Ragstock which housed new and recycled clothing, which all fell on a different point on the spectrum from vintage to modern. I might post a picture from that tomorrow, we'll see.
3. We went to Wal-Mart, again, before going to the group picnic. Our aim to spend 10 minutes there probably wasn't a great one, so we missed the bus and got a Lyft. The driver, James, was pretty good and had created his own business around Lyft and Uber, so that was pretty cool, and we were definitely driving in style. James from Ames, for anyone interested.
4. After that, we met up with the rest of the group for the REU picnic, where we played card games that included 6-person War and a scream-filled game of Spoons. After we got back, Masashi, Emma and I played a brief water balloon fight so that Masashi could get rid of some of his water balloons (fun fact, he originally had 650).
5. I realized that I'd forgotten my laptop charger at the VRAC, so after making a salad I made my way down there and retrieved it, making it just in time to catch the bus that took me back to Freddy.

That's about it! I almost managed to condense this post to be under 400 words, which would definitely be an achievement for me. Maybe next time, or some time in the (distant) future, I can manage that!

Anyway, it's getting kind of late here and I have to get a start on learning C++, so I will be signing off for the night.

Till next time,

Kate

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

VR and Corn and Bubble Tea, Oh My!



Posted on June 4, 2017 by katwell

It's June 3rd, over four whole days since we got here. Only another month, make that two, left to go.

It's been a pretty good time since the events of my last blog post. Emma and I got more bubble tea and saw more corn, we used Sushi's VR headset, and a couple of us got acquainted with the idea of virtual reality horror games, Amnesia-style.

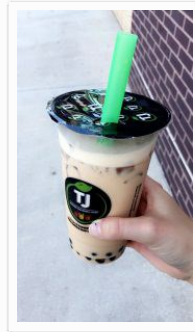
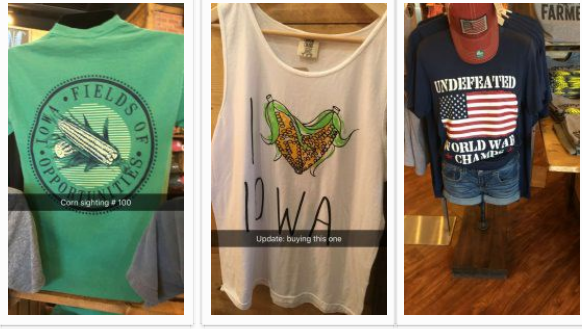
So, with that, here we go.

Quick update: we just had another incident, which I will talk about more in a sec (or a bit longer, y'know)

So, onto the bubble tea. I'm gonna be quick about this one because I'm sure people are a bit sick of hearing about it. We got bubble tea, tried the signature tea today, and left with the promise of getting a free upgrade next time.

On to the corn part deux, trois, whatever it is.

So we went to the campus outfitter store, Barefoot, and looked around for more corn shirts. We both got corn tank tops, and Emma got a corn hat.



Our **signature** tea

That stuff all happened today, so we're gonna go a bit farther back for this next bit. Sorry about that, just really wanted to write about the corn.

After we ended our day and had time to get ready, most of us went to the Art Walk down in Main Street, where we saw a really artsy piano. After that, we went to a music store and spent who-knows-how-long on the instruments. I didn't mind of course, but I really have no idea how long we spent in there. We then got pizza, came back, and ran into Alfredo, who had gone MIA around the music store. We all headed back to the apartments and a bunch of us went to do Sushi's VR a bit later.

So for the sake of condensing, and because I'm sure lots of people have mentioned this horror game, I am just going to say that I had no idea what I was doing, ran into a Weeping Angel (Doctor Who fans will understand the terror) and got annihilated by the "Giant Fetus Dog" in a short amount of time. Between that and the bloodcurdling screams of those before me (aka Sofia), it was a very eventful, and scary, night. Horror in VR is definitely an experience, so 10/10 would recommend (actually, that's probably a lie. Not sure that any of us who did it would recommend it).

So back onto the events of tonight, aka the incident I hinted towards. So the room above us was being pretty loud, and we could hear their music very clearly, so Emma was like "what if I tell them that I'm an RA and I was getting noise complaints?"

So, long story short, we did that. The conversation went something like this:

Emma: *knocks*

Me: Starts to laugh

Emma: "Do not laugh"

Me: *knocks*

Emma: *knocks*

Guy from the room: "Hi, what's up?"

Emma: "Hey, we're the RA's from the first and second floor, and we were getting a lot of noise complaints, and we were just wondering if you could..."

Guy: "Turn the music down?"

Us: "Yeah"

Guy: "Oh yeah sure, sorry about that. I'm actually an RA"

Us: *Internal heart attacks*

Guy: It was last semester though, but yeah, I know how it feels, so we'll keep the noise down. Sorry."

Emma: "Yeah, thanks, umm, we just got a lot of complaints and wanted you to know."

Me: "Yeah, if you could try to keep it down, we'd really appreciate it"

Guy: "Of course. Sorry about that" *closes door*

Us: *Dies laughing once out of earshot*

So, yeah, we pretended to be RA's to a random occupant of the building who is older than us and is a former RA. Hopefully he's not at the REU picnic on Sunday.

So there we have it. A fun day, filled with corn and horror and former RA's. Fun fact, we also cooked our first full meal.

With that, I will sign off, and hope for another good 24 hours to come.

Kate

Posted on June 3, 2017 by katwell

Hello all,

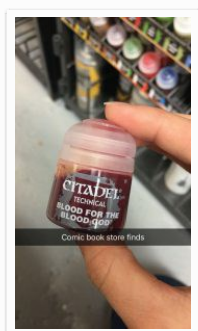
It's day four here, and the second day of blogging. Thus far, today's been pretty awesome, but I'll write more on that later.

Last night was pretty nice, and involved more walking downtown. After being bussed back to the apartments and putting down our stuff, Jameel, Emma, Devi, Chris, Emmanuel and I went to the comic book store in Ames, Mayhem Collectibles. On the way, per Emma's and my request, we stopped at the bubble tea place, which was conveniently located right where we parked. It was just as good as yesterday, maybe better (this time I opted for the pearls and not the strangely textured jellies). Emma and I got six points added to our rewards, (74 more to go!) and a free upgrade (not sure what that means), and we all got something to drink (most of us ordered the same thing).



Artsier than the last one

The comic book store was an experience. There were, no one, but two floors, with the bottom one including cardboard cutouts of Benedict Cumberbatch and the 9th and 11th doctors. Among some of the comics displayed were Bob's Burgers comics, which were interesting. There were many many board games, including a Game of Thrones one, and my favorite part was the paints with which to paint action figures. In addition to the wide variety of colors represented, each color had a crazy name. A couple of my favorites were Dryad's Bark, Apocalypse Dust, and, as pictured below, Blood for the Blood God.



One of my favorites



"Fantasy football"

Thus far, we've learned more about Journal Club and done Myers Briggs testing. Fun fact, I'm an INFJ. The coolest part of today so far, in my opinion, was the technology tour. We got to stand in a 3-D room (the closest phrase with which I can describe it) and, with goggles, were surrounded by six sides of a 3-D virtual environment. By standing close to Vijay, our tour guide who also had the goggles on and was controlling the environment, we got to see what happened if we ran through the walls of the plane and floated in mid-air (for those who had a fear of heights, that was an interesting experience). The coolest part for me was putting on Oculus and Vive goggles, and getting to shoot down robots in a virtual reality environment. I'm not a big fan of first-person shooters, but doing it in a more real-life setting where the controls were more realistic was much more fun for me. I recommend it for those who ever get a chance to try on VR goggles.

This ends this blog post and summary of our most recent 24 hours of bloggable material. Next time, get ready for a summary of our main street walk, day three of bubble tea (don't worry, this part won't be too long), more corn-related t-shirts, and my experience with horror + VR.

Signing off,

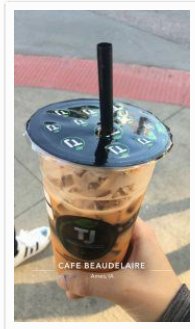
Kickoff – Day 1 (and 2 and 3!)



Posted on June 1, 2017 by katwell

It is now our third day here, and second full day of scheduled activities. We're all a bit tired and jet lagged, but we've learned a lot so far. Namely, I've noticed a couple very important things:

1. Ames has great bubble tea
2. At least two Snapchat filters in Iowa have corn cobs
3. The temptation to order out every night instead of cook for oneself is real
4. There exist campuses so big that they have 10 different bus routes and not one, but two college towns
5. Iowa is really green
6. Homesickness will probably happen the first time you move to a campus farther than driving distance



The bubble tea in question

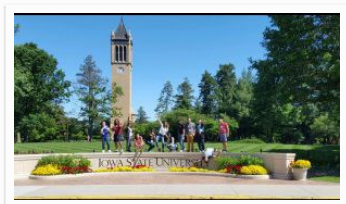


One of the many corn sightings in Ames

For someone who goes to a campus 45 minutes from her house, and 10 minutes from her dad's workplace, going halfway across the country and staying there is a bit of an adjustment. Saying goodbye to my parents was difficult, and my mom pointed out that this is the first time it feels as though I'm leaving for college.

That being said, thus far it's been a fairly smooth transition, and we've been kept pretty busy. The first day when we flew in, we had a bit of time to unpack (most of us did, anyway), and we went out to dinner at an upscale campus sports bar. We then headed to Wal-Mart to get essentials, and probably forgot something along the way.

Yesterday was our first full-time day, and it was mostly an orientation day. We did get to play disc golf, which was pretty eventful, and take a group picture in front of the landmark that always pops up when I google Iowa State University (shown below).



Our wonderful group picture

We did have a chance to learn more about our REU, which was exciting, and in the process we learned a bit more about all of the people with a stake in this project, or the "shareholders".

One of my roommates, Emma, and I went downtown and tried to get familiar with the surroundings – this is how we ended up finding the bubble tea and the campus store with the corn shirts (which, incidentally, had a giveaway shirt). We got a bit sidetracked while I tried to find a grocery store, but we made it back, so all's well that ends well. The night ended with Chipotle and trying to set up the IDEs (with little success) for C++. Might just give up and use Emacs, but we'll see how that goes.

Today we learned more about our projects, and about research itself. We got a chance to meet with some other members of our team, including faculty and grad students, and talk about the expectations for the project. I myself am on the TIMELI team, which is

working on a system that will allow for quicker and more efficient traffic response.

We also got to see the gym, which was pretty amazing of course. Giant rock walls, a whirlpool, a hot tub, and the “buns of steel bridge” made for an interesting place.

We had some more adventures tonight after we left the VRAC (which is really cool by the way, as is Howe Hall, the building in which VRAC is housed), but I'll write about them tomorrow so as to actually have some content to write about during our blog time. In the meantime, time to learn C++ and figure out what we're doing for our research project.

Till next time,

Kate



*Not the best picture,
but I thought I should
put a picture up of
Howe Hall after
mentioning how great it
is*

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