

ERC and UCSD: Honors Students' Reflections

Becca Kasl, first year, Bioengineering: Premedical major



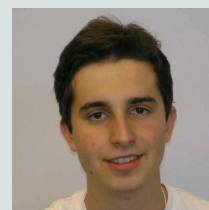
Make your college decision! This resounding statement epitomized the parent-child relationship during my senior year of high school. Goodness, it's so much easier said than done. Seemingly limitless factors to prioritize and daunting, uncertain, yet simultaneously exciting prospects crowded my thoughts a year ago. I was a student determined to succeed with leadership experiences galore, a dedicated hospital volunteer, a tutor, and soon to graduate in the top 1% of my class.

My number one priority was a rigorous academic schedule in a top ranked program that would advocate a future career in medicine, a goal actualized here at UCSD. Although a more engineering-inclined student, I wanted to embrace the liberal arts and obtain a well-rounded education. Eleanor Roosevelt College promotes cultural diversity through many outlets, and I was surprised to find that these were not limited to ethnic backgrounds and study abroad opportunities. The ERC Honors Program has given me variety beyond my "math-and-science comfort zone," as I like to call it. So while I conduct sonothrombolysis research at the UCSD Medical Center, volunteer through a plethora of campus organizations, hold an officer position in an engineering student council committee, and socialize with my sorority sisters and suitemates, I have been encouraged to pursue a minor in linguistics.

To all you science students, I challenge you to tread into the unknown territory outside your comfort zone and diversify your college experience. I promise you—you'll find the best of both worlds here at ERC.

Alex Gorin, first year, Molecular Biology major

I had an extremely hard time choosing which college I wanted to go to. I felt that I could never make a decision without regretting the decision that I made. I was trying to decide between going to UCSD and UC Berkeley. On one hand I felt that Berkeley had a reputation and a name yet on the other hand I knew that UCSD had as good if not better of a program for the major that I wanted.



I finally decided to go to UCSD because I felt that the school was more personal. After coming to Scholars' Day I felt that people at UCSD wanted me to go there and were ready to help me.

It seems that I was right in choosing UCSD. I doubt that there are many other schools where I could know the Provost and Dean of Student Affairs of my college and have them almost as advisors in my college life. At the same time I think that the six-college system is great. I know almost every person in my year at ERC. Coming back to ERC almost makes me feel at home. It is a small personal setting within an enormous public university, just another way of making things more personal.

As for the academics I'm quite happy as well. I know that I'm learning the same things as my friends who chose to go to other schools like Berkeley. The professors that I have had are always willing to help. In addition I think that MMW here at ERC is great, it's a nice change of pace from studying science and math all day and I think that the class truly does help you understand the world much better.

Kimberly Ang, first year, History major



Through the trying times of college applications, I barely thought once that I'd be going to UCSD. So when it turned out to be my best option, I came here nervous and a little worried. But I have come to love it more than I thought I even could.

I've been lucky enough to build a network of really funny and fun-loving friends. There is always something to do with them— study breaks hosted by various clubs, endless searches for free food, jam sessions on the piano in Middle Earth, trips to Black's Beach or downtown San Diego, weekend get-togethers – you name it. My social life makes for a great balance with my academic experience, which, thanks to the Freshman Honors Seminar, is also exciting.

The hour and a half that we spend with the Provost each week has really been a pathway for me to navigate this HUGE institution. Provost Craig knows this school so much better than I do, so her advice and guidance has been integral in my search for classes, professors and programs that fit my interests. Through the Honors Seminar and Provost Craig's help, I've found my minor and lined up an internship for next year. And as an honors student, we get the inside scoop on visits from the chairman of the NAACP or a managing editor of *Newsweek* magazine, and we get a nice taste of what La Jolla has to offer on our field trips.

People always say that college is the time of your life. But remember that you have to choose for it to be that way – you have to find what you love and enjoy and go with it. For me, honors has helped me do just that.

Christina Burrows, second year, International Studies-Literature major

The UCSD Freshman Honors Program gave me the opportunity to participate in a small, seminar-style class. Throughout the program we were introduced to professors from all different departments at UCSD and we were given the opportunity to hear about and discuss their research and areas of expertise. Meeting professors from fields about which I had previously known very little encouraged me to take classes outside of my major. In fact, through the seminar I met professors who inspired me to take classes in Education Studies and International Migration Studies, and now I am earning minors in both. I also met students who had previously been in the honors program and who had incredible experiences studying abroad. Talking with them about their volunteer work and classes in foreign countries convinced me to apply to study in Argentina for a semester.



The honors program is conducted in a small, weekly seminar-style setting with the same students over three quarters. The first few quarters, when all of my classes were larger lectures, the seminar provided a place where everyone was comfortable talking, discussing and arguing because we had all gotten to know each other. I even met some of my closest friends freshman year through the weekly seminar.

Overall, the Freshman Honors Program gave me the opportunity to meet other ERC freshman through the weekly seminar and it introduced me to programs which I otherwise would not have explored.

JACOB BLANC, second year, History major



Being in the MMW honors program has given me the small-school feel that I was worried about not having at a huge public university like UCSD. All of our honors sections have around only fifteen students and that creates a perfect environment where nobody is afraid to participate in the discussions and give their honest opinions. With such a small class size we grow very comfortable around each other and that takes away any tensions that could arise since we are talking about really contentious issues. I like that as honors students we are held to a higher standard; it gives us more academic independence and we feel more mature taking such an active role in our education.

If the MMW honors program made us feel more adult, then the ERC 92 project gives us the impression that we are already in graduate school. The chance to form our own independent research project and work one-on-one with a faculty member has been one of the most rewarding experiences for me at UCSD. While doing research with my advisor, I decided to continue my sophomore year project when I study abroad in France and to finish it senior year as my honors thesis. Few undergrads can boast of spending three years on a research project that included traveling around the world to do first hand primary source research.

The honors programs at ERC have definitely been defining characteristics in my college experience.

CAMDEN YUMORI, fourth year, double major in Economics and Art History

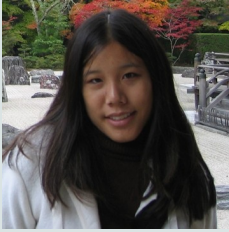
When considering my options for college, I never stopped to consider which school would offer me the widest *range* of opportunities. Ironically, this is exactly what I have come to appreciate about UCSD. Not only have I been able to study a wide variety of subjects, I have also been able to apply what I have learned in my travels abroad.

It is a credit to UCSD that my typical school schedule has included courses ranging from Law and Economics to Italian Cities in the Renaissance. I have been able to study two very different majors, Economics and Art History. I believe that such academic diversity can be partially attributed to the quarter system, which allows for more courses in the school year. I am also grateful to have taken the ERC Honors Seminars, which made me realize that I had passions in more than one area of study. It also gave me the opportunity to interact with professors in a more intimate setting. It has certainly paved the way for my current project, writing my thesis with the help of some of my favorite professors.

Though rewarding on their own, my studies would not have nearly as much impact had I not studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain for a semester. Art History took on a whole new meaning when I learned about the art as I was experiencing it. I also came to appreciate ERC's Making of the Modern World, as I visited many of the locations we had discussed and could fully understand their significance. In retrospect, it feels as though my time at UCSD has been much longer than four years, simply because of the diversity of my experiences.



Melissa Lee, fourth year, Political Science major



“What if they call on me?” I was sitting in on a meeting of the United Nations Development Program in New York. I wasn’t the only American in the room, but I was the only American representing the United States.

I soon realized they don’t cold-call in these meetings. The proceedings are largely scripted and real business is done in small rooms behind closed doors. I was fortunate enough to witness some of these backroom meetings as a State Department intern. The experience was eye-opening.

My UCDC internship helped develop my interest in the United Nations, and when I returned to UCSD, I tried to figure out how to turn that interest into a political science senior thesis. I had known since second year that I wanted to pursue a large-scale research project, but until I participated in UCDC, I had no idea what I wanted to write about. I eventually chose peacekeeping, one of the UN’s higher-profile activities.

The cool thing about a senior honors thesis is that I get to conduct in-depth research on something I care about, something not taught in a regular class. I’m writing about the effects of UN Security Council approval of non-UN peacekeeping operations – NATO’s action in Kosovo, for example. They don’t teach this subject at UCSD for a good reason: *nobody* has written on my topic before. That fact has made my project extremely hard but extremely rewarding. Because I’m the first to tackle this question, I’m making a significant contribution to the field of political science. Most undergraduates elsewhere don’t even get the chance to conduct independent research. It’s definitely a lot of hard work, but frankly, it’s also really exciting and a lot of fun!

Nick Aldridge, fifth year, General Biology major

The biggest reason I chose UCSD was the students themselves. They possess a unique blend of academic integrity and fun-loving exuberance and I am proud to count myself among them.



The most important thing you can do in college is to strike a balance between academics and extracurricular activities, and UCSD offers an especially suitable environment for this. My first week at UCSD I was invited to play on an intramural inner tube water polo team. Once introduced to sub-collegiate sports, I was immediately hooked. I captained intramural teams in soccer, basketball, tennis, and dodge ball, and played on the UCSD club soccer team. I also worked for the intercollegiate athletics program. The intramural program at UCSD is incredibly well developed and offers students of all athletic types and skills a chance to get away from the library and other stresses and enjoy themselves.

As a biology major with a minor in political science, ERC has been especially fitted for my broad interests. My intellectual curiosity wouldn’t have been satisfied with only studying “hard” science and it eventually led me to study abroad for a year in Chile. There is no single better experience than studying abroad. The opportunity to immerse yourself in another culture is one that should not be missed.

As my 5th year at UCSD winds down, I can honestly say that there is no university setting which could have better suited my diverse interests and passions than Eleanor Roosevelt College and UCSD. The students, faculty and staff are what makes UCSD great and I hope you decide to join us.