

The Uncommon Blog | The Office of College Admissions at the University of Chicago: August 2013 Archives



August 2013 Archives

[On Being A Fourth Year](#)



As the days begin to slowly shrink, and incoming first-years start getting their dorm room supplies together and saying their goodbyes to friends from home who are going away too, and preparing for Orientation Week in late September, it's hard not to reminisce about beginnings. The start of UChicago is an exciting time - a *really* exciting time, and waiting for the end of next month this time three years ago was agony. I just wanted to go. But then, all of a sudden, a plane ride from London and a cab from O'Hare later, it started:

The first weekend, sleeping in I-House with the other international students as we had our own Orientation, so excited I could burst. The first night in the city with my Graham housemates, making funny faces in the Bean. The first giant game of capture-the-flag in the warm dark on the main quad, running between the trees. The first of many nights at the house-table in the dining hall that stretched on *forever*, because no one wanted to leave the kind of electric, amazing conversation they'd told us about. The first time we found the Div School Coffee shop. The first time we went searching for Hume books in the basement of the Seminary Co-op. The first snow.

I am so excited for the first day of school this time, too. Fourth years are going to be figuring out BA projects, job prospects for next year, applications to grad schools and new opportunities, and when to take those classes we need to take to finish up our majors (and also taking those classes we've always wanted to - like *TAPS 23500. Aerial and Circus with Actors Gymnasium* because circus). It's exciting.

But there's also something bitter-sweet about knowing that for some of us, this is our last fall quarter - our last time to get excited about the open fireplaces in Reynold's being turned on as winter comes, and the quads becoming burgundy and gold, and then strung with Christmas lights. It'll be our last time thinking of hilarious costumes for Halloween on campus, last time to hitch rides with friends home for Thanksgiving, last first-Wednesday-back-after-summer-shake-day-shakes.

It's bitter because of course, come this time next year, we'll all be somewhere else in the world. But it's sweet because sometimes, when you're sitting in C-Shop laughing with your friends from first-year, or you get a little confused about which building a class is in on the first day and have to ask, or you spend too long at the lunch table because you're lost in a conversation... it feels just like the beginning again.

The Internet OR The Scourge That is BuzzFeed OR A Big Human Mess

As a communications intern in Outreach I see a lot of the Internet. I see so much of the Internet I wish I could unsee some of the internet. Much of the internet is smut. For instance:

I. Don't. Care. About. Lindsay. Lohan. BuzzFeed. I. Don't. Care.

Yet, somehow I still manage to click on her plastic, tired, once so beautiful face and Wait hang on you mean to tell me that...LINDSAY LOHAN HAS A MORNING ROUTINE?? I HAVE A MORNING ROUTINE????? Must. Click. Must...

See what I mean.

So basically the Internet is full of roughly 2 percent quality material. The other 98% is vile filth and nonsense. Nevertheless, we, the noble, the few, the outreach interns, troll through it all so you don't have to. For you. For all you purveyors of our social media. Because we love you.

I realize, very much, that we would be woefully lost without the Internet. It runs, frames, simplifies, directs our daily lives. It's the infernal machine we can't live without.

That being said. I hate it.

Specifically, recently, I hate the endlessly accumulative dustbin of the Internet that is BuzzFeed. I'm on it all the time mind you, but I hate it. I hate it's smugness. I hate it's infernal ability to draw me into any article, no matter how inane. I hate how nothing is sacred. Someone's bad day, someone's death, someone being stupid in a video, all there for us to ogle at. Also, I'm constantly disappointed by it's content. THERE ARE MORE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD THAN JUST INTROVERTS AND JUST EXTROVERTS. OF COURSE COLLEGE STUDENTS SHOULD STUDY ABROAD. OF COURSE COLLEGE STUDENTS SHOULD "BRANCH OUT AND MEET NEW PEOPLE." GAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.

I also can't get enough of it.

Because, ONLY BECAUSE, believe it or not. BuzzFeed does happen to inspire. Every once in a great while, it inspires, it tweaks the heartstrings, it richens and enlivens instead of merely distracting.

One short example: the inclusion of [gifs like this](#).

Which gives me pause. Because this rings true very much of humanity as well. There are so many facets of humanity that suck. A lot. But there are also ones that shine, and those often shine bright enough to block out the awful.

This makes further sense when I think about BuzzFeed as a concept. It's a conglomeration and compilation of the internet/pop culture/news and, most importantly, it's streamlined, designed and compiled by ordinary people. Ordinary people with every belief, interest and passion under the sun.

(I feel a point coming on here folks....)

Kinda like college.

(There is is.)

So I guess, despite my annoyance with it, BuzzFeed ultimately plays a more beneficial role than I wish to give it. In my near constant perusal of it, I have come to realize that while it is at times (read regularly) a vile, tedious, overtly superficial, formulaic mess, it is at others, a breath of fresh air, and a very real glimpse at what good, and more importantly, what is different and diverse and special about humanity. It has become a way we see our world, and while encapsulated snippets of nuanced things often is problematic, it still, despite itself, connects, informs, and entertains us all in one huge, loud, often ridiculous, but very human, mess.

So I guess I'll keep using it...

Complaining the entire way.

Can It Be September 30th Already?!

It's that time of year again--college students are moving into their respective dorms and apartments and classes are starting up soon. At least for those on the semester system.

Since UChicago is on the quarter/trimester system, we still have **6 more weeks of summer!** Seeing all of my friends' picture blasts on Facebook and Instagram about their campuses, new textbooks, social activities, etc. makes my heart pang for my own third round of the college experience to hurry up and get here. That being said, there are tons of things that I am looking forward to in the fall:

- Seeing all my friends from UChicago who travelled or had an internship in another state this summer
- Decorating my apartment with my roommates (we're painting our living room white and navy and plan on having bamboo plants and tons of shelves and pictures and lights...in case you were wondering)
- O-Week!
- Brisk temperatures
- My classes ahhhh (Stats224, Psychology of Decision Making, and Intro to Developmental Psych) #NerdAlert
- Breakfast, Brunch, Lunch, Linner, Dinner, 2nd Dinner, Dessert... basically any meal dates at the Med
- Recruitment for my sorority
- My birthday (October 20th). I'll be celebrating my 21st in *VEGAS BABY!!*
- Cooking real meals for my boyfriend and friends
- Feeding squirrels on the quad my leftover sandwich nom bits
- The leaves changing color and gracefully falling off their trees
- Apartment shindigs
- Warm and cuddly sweaters, colorful scarves, fuzzy and leather boots
- Getting delicious chai tea from C-Shop and reading a good novel for one of my assignments

All right, this list is not really helping with my wanting-fall-quarter-to-be-here-now thing. Seriously though, fall quarter is my favorite quarter here on campus. It is *beautiful*, the spirits are up, and it is a fresh, new start. I always take three classes so I can enjoy all that fall quarter has to offer.

But since I still have so many more weeks of summer I should stop looking into the future and enjoy the moment, right? Maybe I'll head to the beach soon since it will be in the high 80s all week here in Chicago. I could send perfectly Instagrammed pictures to my friends and say, "#6moreweeksofsummer #sorrynotsorry #haha".

Until next time,
Alexis

Three Things I Can't Wait to Do (and/ or Eat) When I Get Back to Hyde Park



Well, this marks my last week in the Big City. Glimmering, hectic New York will have to keep humming along without me, as I'll be flying back to Chicago this weekend when my internship ends...and probably listening to [this](#) on the plane. But as much as I can't wait to get back to my Hyde Park apartment (and my roommates, how I have missed you) - the three things I'm really looking forward to coming home to are most definitely food and caffeine related:

Valois

Because where else can you get the Obama Special on a Saturday morning? The President and I have similar taste in breakfast food, apparently. Valois is a Hyde Park staple, and serves amazingly cheap pancakes and eggs and coffee and such. As well as having a favorite spot (by the window, in the middle) and a tried-and-true method for ordering, I love it because the walk from home over to the busiest cafeteria in our neighborhood - through Nichol's Park and along 53rd Street - is probably my favorite part of HP weekends.

Grounds of Being

Most UChicagoans have their go-to coffee spot on campus. It takes a little while when you get here (incoming first years, try them all!), but it *happens*. You find a favorite. Being social in the basement of Cobb is for some, curling up in the ivy-windowed corner of Classics or shooting pool in Hallowed Grounds are for others, and C-Shop (and Hutch Courtyard) and Ex Libris are good, buzzing staples. But Div School has the best coffee in their basement: God drinks there, so it must be true.

Z&H

Why the secret back patio behind Z&H is a secret is constant source of confusion for me. I always want to spread the good news about the sandwich/ coffee shop on 57th St (it's pretty! And outside! And has trees with flowers!), while simultaneously keeping it a secret. So if you promise not to tell anyone, tell the (lovely) people behind the counter to take your order 'out back', and then wander down the alley to find your seat. But yeah, an iced coffee and a big salad and a warm afternoon back there... bliss.

Other notable mentions: sushi at the Sitdown, the half/dark at Harold's Chicken, late night candy from Bart Mart.

My Past Week and Slam Poetry at UChicago

Hey folks. In the last week three main things happened:

1) I went to Letchworth State Park in upstate NY. Here, all the trails are situated alongside this huge river gorge. So you're walking through *Last of the Mohicans* style forest and then you look to your right and there's a 400-foot drop to a rocky splot. Beautiful but deadly. Like Oreos. Or the holy grails at the end of Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.

2) I went to Niagara falls. There was a lot of water. Who knew?

3) I also watched [this video](#) and may or may not have cried a little from mingled confusion/bliss.

But enough about me. More important things are happening here at the University:

This week, from August 7-11, held at the University of Chicago's own Logan Center for the Arts, is Brave New Voices, an international youth slam poetry festival that is run in part by [Young Chicago Authors](#), a poetry non-profit from Chicago. Slam poetry began in 1984, created by poet and construction worker Marc Smith at the Green Mill Poetry lounge in Chicago. Instead of poetry simply being recited, Smith had the idea to actively and dynamically perform it. He added a scoring system to make it more appealing to the non-poetic casual barfly, and slam was born. It works to balance the allure of competition with the artistry of performance poetry, and it has since morphed into an international phenomenon. Specifically in Chicago, it has become a way for youth to express themselves, and share their stories; working against the destructive and divisive force of urban violence to bridge the divides between backgrounds and create art. Young Chicago Authors is at the forefront of this teaching effort; each year hosting [Louder Than a Bomb](#), the world's largest youth slam that pulls in teams (ranging from middle school to college) from all over the city to compete. UChicago too is in on this movement. [Catcher in the Rhyme](#), UChicago's Slam Poetry RSO, is entering only its 3rd year but still boasts over 100 members who come to perform, write and discuss poetry at open mics and slam events throughout the year. It is full of talented, devoted folks, several of which are involved in Brave New Voices. This festival is essentially 5 days of performances, workshops, meetings and lectures, all revolving around performance poetry and its surrounding social issues, such as racism and urban youth violence. For instance, tonight the Red Moon Theatre is debuting their SONIC BOOM, a gigantic spectacle of...well just [read about it](#). Most importantly however, this is the largest youth poetry festival in the world. It's by young people for young people from all over the world, and it's something else. If you are in Chicago this weekend and want to get a taste of the slam poetry scene/see some crazy talented kids saying some crazy awesome things in crazy awesome ways. Check it out. Event info at the bottom.

That's all. Until next time.

Brave New Voices Info:

[Festival Schedule and Info](#)

[Performance Videos](#)

[Peace out, Chicago](#)

Hi again everyone! I write from my porch in Hyde Park, looking out over my kingdom of 54th street. Phase One of summer - an internship in Chicago - is winding down, and I'm excited for Phase Two to begin! In a few days I leave for Berlin, Germany, and will be there until classes start up again, in about 7 weeks. (It may already be August, but thanks to the [quarter system](#), we still have a ways to go until classes resume.)

After studying abroad in [Vienna](#) last fall, I was eager to return to German-speaking Europe. Luckily, thanks to the [Foreign Language Acquisition Grant \(FLAG\)](#), an incredible program run by the study abroad office, after a simple application and a few weeks of waiting, I was notified that the University of Chicago would pay for my travels! Not a bad deal.

I'll be taking German classes at the [did deutsch-Institut](#), a language school that was recommended to me by a fellow UChicago student who took courses with them last summer. I'm [sharing an apartment](#) with two students from Berlin, living just a few blocks away from another UChicago friend of mine, also funded by FLAG to study German in Berlin.

If any of you have any suggestions of what I should see or do in Berlin, please let me know! I will have plenty of afternoons and evenings to explore the city. (As of now, most of the things on my to-do list involve [pretzels](#), [beer](#), and [techno clubs](#).)

Social Media Marketing Ploy

Hiii,

As an intern here at the Admissions office this summer who deals mainly with social media, I feel it is one of my duties to raise awareness about all of the channels that we have for you all to browse and enjoy! If you're already following, "like"-ing, etc. one or all of them--great! But if you're not following us on one of these mediums I expect you to create an account and follow us as soon as possible. This is not a request.

[Tumblr](#): Bloggy blog with some sweet photos, gifs, and news (read: BuzzFeed) articles.

[Twitter](#): Witty banter about our university in 140 characters or less.

[Facebook](#): Run by the Prospective Students Advisory Committee (PSAC); gander at some interesting UChicago tidbits and pretty pictures.

[Pinterest](#): Virtual cork board of stuff related to UChicago, Chicago, and nerdy things.

[YouTube](#): Videos. And more videos that showcase UChicago in everything from student life to the city of Chicago.

[Google+](#): Keep us in your circle to see fun and interesting UChicago material.

[Weibo \(Chinese Twitter\)](#): All things UChicago in China's version of Twitter. #InternationalLove

[Youku \(Chinese YouTube\)](#): Our favorite videos from the general YouTube channel converted and packaged onto a China-friendly site.

With all of these channels and pages and sites to follow, you have UChicago at your fingertips! Please reach out to us at any of these mediums should you have any questions about campus, your application, or anything else your heart desires (FYI: we know a lot about puns, Doctor Who, cats, historical figures, and coffee among many other topics).

Best,

Alexis