

2025 UCTS report



AT MILLENNIUM PARK

I. Preface

I am Chieh-Ju Hsieh, a first-grade master student from Department of Atmospheric Sciences. Earlier this year (Dec. 2024), I received a notification about an exchange program opportunity at the University of Chicago. Because of considering applying for a PhD in the future, I felt this would be an excellent chance to experience an international research environment firsthand. This program not only allowed me to engage with cutting-edge research, but also gave me the opportunity to immerse myself in life in Chicago and broaden my perspective on both academia and culture.

II. Research in Chicago

During the application period, since there were no climate-relevant professors listed on the UCTS website, I searched through the Geophysics Department website. The first professor I contacted was an expert in ocean science, which is highly related to my master's research. Unfortunately, I didn't receive a reply after sending two emails. Therefore, I turned to Prof. Tiffany Shaw, a leading expert in atmospheric dynamics whose work on jet streams and storm tracks has shed new light on how climate change will alter global circulation. Her contributions have earned her multiple prestigious awards, and I was very fortunate to receive her invitation.

After arriving in Chicago, we discussed possible research directions and decided to explore the mechanism driving the recent contraction of clouds, a phenomenon reported in recent studies but still lacking a clear explanation. I really enjoyed the research environment here, where we can dedicate ourselves fully to scientific

discussion and discovery every day.

At the same time, life outside research has also been enriching. Every Friday evening, we join students from other departments to play softball, and on weekends we often go rock climbing together. These activities have not only helped me stay active but also allowed me to make many new friends from different backgrounds.



MY FRIENDS IN GEOPHYSICS

III. Life in Chicago

During weekdays, life was simple but fun. We often went grocery shopping to buy ingredients and to cook meals in the dorm. Sometimes, we even organized small movie nights together, watching films like *Chicago*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Paprika*. (highly recommend this relaxing event!)

On weekends, we usually went downtown, which was very convenient to reach from where we lived. There were many exciting activities, such as watching baseball games or visiting the aquarium. Among them, the most unforgettable memory was taking the architecture boat tour—listening to the guide share the history of Chicago’s buildings while enjoying the beautiful skyline along the river. We also took a trip outside the city. By riding a FlixBus to St. Louis, we visited the Gateway Arch National Park, where we learned about its history and enjoyed the amazing view from the top of the arch.

Overall, daily life in Chicago was filled with both small, warm moments and unforgettable adventures, making the exchange experience even more meaningful.



BEAUTIFUL CITYSCAPE OF CHICAGO, TAKEN DURING THE ARCHITECTURE BOAT TOUR.



GATEWAY ARCH NATIONAL PARK



SHEDD AQUARIUM

IV. Reflections

First, I would like to sincerely thank Prof. Cheng Chin for arrangement. Without his support, I would not have had such wonderful memories in Chicago.

It was not easy to adapt when I first arrived. The traffic (the CTA is a DISASTER) and safety issues were a bit intimidating. However, as time went on, I gradually became more comfortable and started to enjoy exploring the city. Academically, this program gave me the invaluable opportunity to collaborate with leading scientists. Working with Prof. Tiffany Shaw and her group showed me how to achieve the answer scientifically. The discussions with professors and peers were always inspiring, and they opened new perspectives for my research direction.

Beyond the academic setting, the friendships and interactions I built with people from different backgrounds enriched my daily life. Sharing experiences, exchanging ideas, and learning from one another made the journey far more rewarding than I had expected.

Overall, this program was both challenging and fulfilling. It not only strengthened my research skills but also gave me an unforgettable summer.

V. Contact information

If you have any questions about the application process, living costs, or research related to atmospheric, please feel free to reach out to me.

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