

First of all, I am deeply grateful to the UCTS program for giving me the opportunity to intern in a foreign laboratory. I especially want to thank my PI, Professor William Green, and postdoctoral mentor Anitha for their patient guidance, as well as Professors Chin-Tu and Chin, who served as essential bridges of communication between Taiwanese students and UChicago faculty. For anyone considering pursuing a PhD in the United States, I would highly recommend this program.

What the Lab Experience Taught Me

1. Preparation in Advance

Looking back, I realized the importance of starting early. I would recommend beginning to search for PIs whose research aligns with your interests by September. Not every PI will reply, and some may not be interested, so you need to give yourself enough time to reach out to multiple professors. Personally, I only started in November, and with the January deadline looming, the schedule became very tight. Once accepted, the administrative steps—such as **English proficiency exams** and **visa applications**—must also be handled quickly. I remember my visa interview wasn't scheduled until June, and later a U.S. government policy announcement nearly delayed my arrival. On the lab side, I recommend asking in advance what skills you could prepare beforehand or if you can complete safety courses remotely. That way, you won't lose valuable time when you arrive!

2. Adjusting Expectations

Even if you and your PI initially agree on a project, you need to stay mentally prepared for changes. During my first two weeks, I mainly read papers and observed others' experiments instead of starting my own. When I finally began in the third week, unexpected setbacks occurred—such as animals dying or incorrect reagent concentrations—pushing my project further back.

At that time, I felt anxious: my internship period was short, and I worried about “wasting” time. But I gradually realized that these situations are perfectly normal when entering a new lab. It takes time to adapt to new equipment and techniques. Plus, understanding related projects in the lab is never wasted effort. About a month later, after discussions with my mentors and a senior lab member, I made a bold but wise decision: I switched projects. Instead of behavioral experiments, I moved toward cellular and biochemical work. This taught me an invaluable lesson: **always remain flexible and open to learning**. Remember the purpose of joining such a program—it is a glimpse into what pursuing a research career may actually be like, complete with unexpected challenges and pivots.

Making the Most of UChicago

Outside of the lab, I actively explored the resources and activities offered at UChicago:



1. **Academic talks** – Many were designed for undergraduates and high school students. They gave me insight into research topics and career paths while also offering free pizza (a nice way to save a meal!).
2. **Sports and fitness** – I joined Zumba, weight training, cardio kickboxing, badminton club, and more. It was a great way to stay active and make friends.
3. **Free snacks** – By watching bulletin boards, I discovered many opportunities for free food. I even earned the nickname “Free Food Captain” among my peers!
4. **Paid psychology experiments** – By chance, I found opportunities to volunteer as a study participant and made about 40 USD.
5. **Dorm facilities** – From music practice rooms and meeting spaces to pool and table tennis tables, the dorms provided many ways to relax and socialize.

Unforgettable Group Experiences

I also want to thank our amazing UCTS team leader—Walker, who always organized fun and safe activities. My personal highlights include the dinosaur tour at the Field Museum, admiring masterpieces at the Art Institute, the scenic river tour by boat, and experiencing the vibrant atmosphere at major league baseball and soccer games.



Still, the best part was not the attractions, but the people. We became like a family—cooking together, celebrating birthdays, exercising, watching movies, and more. I was surprised with a wonderful 22nd birthday celebration here, made close friends, and built bonds that felt like “revolutionary comradeship.” To cherish these memories, I even collected everyone’s signatures and stories in a notebook, which I know will bring me joy each time I look back in the future.



A Small Regret, but Lasting Impact

If I have one regret, it is that I missed the final poster presentation and could only submit a written report instead. Still, regardless of the format, this program broadened my vision. It helped me reflect on paths beyond directly becoming a physician after graduation—such as pursuing a PhD.

Though I still have much to learn, I discovered that I truly enjoy the research process. This internship not only expanded my international perspective but also helped me redefine my goals and passions. I believe it will remain a cornerstone in shaping my future career.