

To future students,

I came to Stanford expecting to learn about basic engineering concepts. I thought I would be introduced to ideas like materials processing and design process. I expected to get a basic introduction to different fields of engineering. None of these things accurately describe my experience. My three weeks here were nothing like I expected and for that I am incredibly grateful.

The very first day, I was incredibly overwhelmed by the work we were given. I had never worked with matrices or vectors before, and I felt like an idiot. I didn't expect to be immediately challenged the way I was, and I wasn't quite sure how to react. I did my best to keep up with the others, but I felt like I was failing miserably. Yet for some reason, I felt like I chose the right class.

As the first week progressed, I began to feel more comfortable with the material. The work that had seemed impossible just a few days ago was starting to make sense. Although I still found myself lost during the lectures, I felt as if I had learned an incredible amount in the past week. The class was undoubtedly difficult, but I could see myself progressing at an incredible rate.

Throughout the first week and a half, the class consisted of lectures in the morning and working on homework sets in the afternoon. The problem sets were incredibly difficult, and the lectures were incredibly fast paced and confusing. Then, all of a sudden, before we knew it, it was time for the final projects.

Our final projects redefined my definition of difficult. I had to read my problem over about 7 or 8 times before I could even start to understand what it was asking. When I started working on the project, I often found myself sitting for up to an hour trying to think of how to approach the problem with no productive results. Many times I tried using flawed techniques to solve the problem, and it would take me hours before I realized that I was doing it wrong. I had never been challenged in this way before. However, after hours of work, I started to make progress. I was able to get the first part of the problem. This was like a domino effect, and I was able to complete the rest of the problem in reasonable time. I had solved the problem which I once thought had no solution.

My experience with the final project is symbolic of my experience in the class as a whole. I started out thinking I wouldn't be able to do any of the work. I struggled greatly and thought I would never succeed. However, by the end I was amazed at how far I had come. It was the most challenging experience of my life. You will struggle. You will get stuck on problems. However, through this struggle, you will learn what being an engineer is truly about. You won't know how

to solve the problems that are presented to you. You will need to solve problems in ways you have never been shown. In Nick's class, this is exactly what you will learn how to do.