Michael Rice, UC Honors Program, year-in-review #4, summer 2019

*The University Honors Program encourages its students to reflect upon their learning. I wrote the following essay to look back on what I learned this past year as well as consider my future goals.*

At the end of my year 3 year-in-review, I was just beginning my strategy and trends internship at LPK as well as preparing for my impending move to Berlin. My experiences at LPK were some of the most influential over my future career decisions yet. I simply loved working in strategy and trends, waking up each day feeling energized to go to work. I think I’ve found my niche, and am hoping to explore it further in my fifth(and final) co-op as well as after graduation. I had the opportunity to work on quite a broad scale of projects, from small non-profits to large Fortune 500 companies, and it opened me up to new tools in research – new ways of understanding people broadly speaking.

Moving to Berlin was an equally amazing experience for a number of reasons. Although I’ve really enjoyed my time in Chicago, Cincinnati, Hong Kong, and Shanghai so far, I found a city where I really fit in culturally. It’s such a creative, diverse, and welcoming city. Plenty of the other foreigners I met there said they had only initially planned to stay a few months, and then just never left. It’s truly a magnetic place. School was usually only two days a week, so I ended up taking a part time position at Cee Cee Berlin in the editorial department. Despite not having any formal writing experience, I wrote articles on new restaurants, bars, galleries, events, activities, etc happening all throughout Berlin. It was probably the perfect job to have when moving to a new city. I also had the opportunity to work on a few client projects like a travel magazine and social media for a few other travel clients of ours. I ended up staying their full-time for my spring co-op, extending my stay in Berlin to eight months in total. I absolutely loved it there and am hoping to return to the city soon.

After being away from DAAP for a full year, it certainly feels strange to reacclimate myself to the city and school. Everything feels entirely different yet eerily the same. It’s a consfusing feeling to articulate. This seventh semester of school also offers far more freedoms than I’ve ever had in school before. This semester, I have to pick my topic of inquiry in every single one of my classes, all five. While it appears freeing and enjoyable, it was also very overwhelming at first. My main foci are in food, housing, sustainability and the confluence of the three, but working on food-related topics in four different classes quickly becomes confusing. I’m learning about food literacy in my composition course, studying future food production methods in my capstone prep course, looking at Cincinnati food accessibility in my core studio, designing a tea kettle in my design communications class, and still cooking for myself and trying to organize dinner parties with friends. It’s refreshing to say the least.

This is also the semester we have to begin our capstone projects. The two main topics I’m exploring are co-living / the future of housing and food broadly speaking, from production systems to healthy alternatives. To ground my research as well as give back to the community, I’m hoping to spend more time volunteering at Our Daily Bread, a food pantry and community kitchen in OTR, as well as connect with the Cincinnati Homeless Coalition.

Post-grad life also looms ahead as embark on my final year of school. The current plan is to apply to a variety of international fellowship programs like Princeton in Asia, Princeton in Africa, Fulbright, and Peace Corps. I still have a desire to love abroad and see more of the world, and I think these programs offer some of the best opportunities to do so. Although I’m coming from a traditionally less academic background, I think I can make a strong case for a seat at the table. I’m hoping to connect with the UC Office of Nationally Competitive Awards and receive some guidance sometime soon. The best-case scenario would be to get funding for my capstone topic to carry out further research / implementation post-grad. As long as I put my best foot forward for post-grad, I’m sure I’ll land somewhere that I’ll enjoy.