A LETTER TO THE FRESHMEN

To the Class of 2018/19,

I hope you’re enjoying your first few weeks at Cooper Union. I understand you’ve started your journey here at a rather tumultuous time. Please don’t take any arguments regarding the status of your class to heart. You deserve to be here as much as any of the previous years. I assure you that there is no difference in intelligence and character between you and the current upperclassmen.

You should know that it is incredibly easy to become disillusioned and disheartened at Cooper Union. We’re not lie to you and pretend our college is anywhere near perfect. There is much to fix, but that should not discount the good this school has to offer, it is the rewarding courses you take or the clubs and organizations you join.

Ultimately, it is up to you to decide how you will spend the next four (or five) years. I simply implore you to remain aware of the broader issues here at the Cooper Union and not to take it all through a negative lens. Best,

Saimon Sharif (ChE ’15)
Editor-in-Chief

CAMP TEAM USA AND CAPE COD

Yara Elbiorbory (CE ’14)

The start of freshman year in college is usually never wretched due to the pressures of doing well in classes, meeting classmates, and making friends. Most colleges have an elaborate orientation week where freshman can meet one another and upperclassmen to ease the transition into college. Thus, announcement of an orientation for the incoming freshman class at Camp Team USA at Port Jervis was met with surprise and excitement.

According to Alexa Orrico (ChE ’16) who was a camp counselor at the orientation, planning had been going on since the beginning of the summer. She says, “Starting in the beginning of this past summer, a few students including myself and Dean Baker would have weekly meetings discussing the camp. We then sent out letters to the freshmen encouraging them to go to Camp, designed t-shirts and care packages (which would eventually consist of a t-shirt, towel, Cooper Union flashlight, Cooper Union ID holder, and a shampoo sample), and put together a great group of counselors. Once the final numbers were in, we had to plan who would be in which cabin and on which bus. We decided that we would not just put roommates together in cabins. Instead we randomized the cabins so that people from all floors of the dorm and all majors would be living together. I think doing it this way really made sure that people from all parts of Cooper would be able to meet one another. Over 200 freshmen ended up going to the camp and it was amazing to see them all interact. Some were hesitant to go to the camp at first, but by the end, everyone who I talked to really enjoyed their time there and appreciated the opportunity to make friends in an environment outside of NYC. A lot of them also loved going on the zip line and being catapulted into the air by the blob. After getting back from camp, the freshmen had tons of events set up for them. The attendance at every event was incredible and did not diminish as the week went on.”

She was not the only one who felt that way. John Falls, the Assistant Dean of Admissions, was also very pleased with the camp and stated that it was a huge success. He stated that Cooper had a long tradition of going to a camp but it was interrogated for about 9 or 10 years. The students banded over activities including various sports, zip lining, communals murals, and bonfires. This was a chance for the students to connect in a less-pressure setting and see other sides of their personality. There was a strong interest to get it back started and Dean Baker and Dean Chamberlin were the main people who helped make it possible.

Dean Baker, the Vice President of Student Affairs and Community Relations & Dean of Athletics, told The Pioneer that there were student meetings held every Monday that could run for four hours to plan out orientation. The group of students who made this happen were Jamie Chan (CE ’16), Alex Orrico (ChE ’16), Antonio Surovnowich (Art ’16), Jean Lam (ChE ’17), Ryan Smith-Ch (ChE ’17), Alexa Regennianni (Arch ’15), Jack Donelan (ME ’17), Nick Retmna (CE ’15), and Jason Kim (EE ’15). A list of people were invited such as Malcolm King who is a trustee and a Cooper Alum (EE ’97), Eric Hochshirn (Art ’99), Stephanie Reyer (Art ’06) and her husband, Jason Kim (EE ’06). A lot of them were upperclassmen.

According to Baker, other students who were involved in planning had been going on since the beginning of the summer. Some students including myself and Dean Baker would have weekly meetings discussing the camp. We then sent out letters to the freshmen encouraging them to go to Camp, designed t-shirts and care packages (which would eventually consist of a t-shirt, towel, Cooper Union flashlight, Cooper Union ID holder, and a shampoo sample), and put together a great group of counselors. Once the final numbers were in, we had to plan who would be in which cabin and on which bus. We decided that we would not just put roommates together in cabins. Instead we randomized the cabins so that people from all floors of the dorm and all majors would be living together. I think doing it this way really made sure that people from all parts of Cooper would be able to meet one another. Over 200 freshmen ended up going to the camp and it was amazing to see them all interact. Some were hesitant to go to the camp at first, but by the end, everyone who I talked to really enjoyed their time there and appreciated the opportunity to make friends in an environment outside of NYC. A lot of them also loved going on the zip line and being catapulted into the air by the blob. After getting back from camp, the freshmen had tons of events set up for them. The attendance at every event was incredible and did not diminish as the week went on.”

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The battle to preserve the Cooper Union’s tradition of awarding a full tuition scholarship to all enrolled students rages on.

Formed on December 26, 2013, the Committee to Save Cooper Union was created in order to fight the Board of Trustees’ decision to begin charging tuition to the incoming class of 2014. In order to help fund a legal action, the Committee started a successful Indiegogo campaign that raised over $150,000 within 50 days.

On May 15, the Committee announced that it had filed a lawsuit that would ask for an injunction against charging tuition, an audit of the Cooper Union’s finances to help clarify recent fiscal management, and the creation of “The Associates of Cooper Union.” As called for by the Cooper Union charter, the Associates would act as a check on the Board of Trustees, provide a forum to resolve a trustee through a vote by an elected council.

The New York Supreme Court heard the case on August 15. During the hearing’s lunch break, a rally was held in front of the courthouse at 111 Centre Street and was attended by faculty, students, staff, alumni, and other supporters of the Committee’s lawsuit. At the rally, State Senator Brad Hoylman backed the legal action, saying, “New York needs the same Cooper Union we have had for the past 153 years providing excellence in engineering and the arts. It is time for […] all parties involved to forge a plan that will preserve Peter Cooper’s model of free tuition and save this great institution from becoming just another college.”

Members of the Committee as well as current students set up a table outside of the New Academic Building on September 2 to raise awareness for the lawsuit and answers questions regarding the lawsuit. (Full Disclosure: I was one of these students).

The Court has yet to rule on the case. Whether ruled in favor or against the Committee, the case is expected to go to appeals.
THE PIONEER

Summer Experiences: Peter Ascoli (ME ’15)

Peter Ascoli (ME ’15)

THE PIONEER is an undergraduate journal created to recognize student achievement in engineering and the written word. Any student is welcome to submit writing, art, or photography for consideration in THE PIONEER. All content is originally written by students. Visit thepioneer.gatech.edu for more information.

The Pioneer Intern interviews current students from the art, architecture, and engineering schools about their summer experiences. These interviews will be published as a series. We hope they will serve to highlight the diverse achievements of our student body.

How is your interview with Peter Ascoli (ME ’15)?

SAMSON SHARIF (CE ’15)

Peter Ascoli: Where did you work?

Peter Ascoli: I worked as a mechanical design engineer intern at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

Tell us more about your work experience at Kennedy Space Center.

Peter Ascoli: My role was to perform a variety of tasks related to the mechanical design of engineering components for the Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB) and the Orion spacecraft. I was responsible for ensuring that the equipment I designed and produced met the required specifications and tolerances. This involved working closely with other engineers and technicians to develop and refine designs that were safe and reliable for use in the space environment. In addition to designing new components, I also worked on modifying and improving existing designs to meet changing requirements.

What did you like best about working at Kennedy Space Center?

Peter Ascoli: I enjoyed the diversity of projects and the opportunity to work on a wide range of challenges. I was able to apply my engineering skills to designing components for the VAB and the Orion spacecraft. I also had the chance to work on developing new processes for manufacturing components in a cleanroom environment. The work was intellectually stimulating and I felt a sense of accomplishment in knowing that my designs were part of a larger system that would be used for space missions.

What was the most challenging part of your summer internship?

Peter Ascoli: The most challenging part of the internship was working on the 10-week project. I was responsible for designing a component that would be used in the VAB for a space launch. I had to work closely with other team members and engineers to ensure that the component met all of the necessary specifications and requirements. It was a demanding project, but it also allowed me to gain valuable experience in working in a team environment.

How do you think your experience at Kennedy Space Center will benefit your future career?

Peter Ascoli: Working at Kennedy Space Center was an invaluable experience for my future career. It gave me an opportunity to work on projects that are at the forefront of space exploration and to work with some of the brightest minds in the industry. I learned a lot about the design process and the importance of collaboration and communication in engineering projects. I also gained a better understanding of the regulatory and safety requirements that are necessary for space missions. This experience will be invaluable as I pursue my career in the field of mechanical engineering.