What aspect of the Columbia community, outside of the classroom, would you most want to impact and why? (150 words or less)

In Green Club, I was the devout member scrambling from classroom to classroom, recycling bin to recycling bin, snatching papers and plastics to be reused. Laboring alongside other environmentalists and tree-huggers, I refilled bird-feeders and scooped up stray trash. In my humble Green Club beginnings, I waded into the realm of conservation; at Columbia, I want to dive in head-first. I seek to focus on sustainability, energy sustainability, within the network of environmental organizations that is the Green Umbrella. Joining the welcoming community of Students for Environmental and Economic Justice, I might be lucky enough to continue their campaigns for Columbia to increase wind power usage. Or volunteering my time for EarthCo events, I will find fulfillment in Earth Tutors by educating others on the issues surrounding climbing energy demands. Energy sustainability calls upon the purposeful enthusiasm that I have championed zooming through winding hallways for the past three years.

Please tell us what you value most about Columbia and why. (300 words or less)

Gulp, I inch towards the plaza. Dead-ahead lies the TKTS booth, the central ruby on the dazzling crown of Times Square. I stop and goggle. Superstructures of flagship merchandise and commercialism surround. An involuntary smile pervades my lips, but my mind soon returns to business. With onlookers teeming, I lie spread-eagled on Duffy Square. A businessman, evading the bizarre detour, grumbles, “Nice spot.” I am unperturbed; I push the envelope. As the granite floor pierces my tailbone, my gaze pierces the disapproving stare of a construction worker. I hear snickering nearby. Heart palpitations grow in frequency; my resolve grows in strength. 30 seconds have passed. As my chest pounding gradually dissipates, I get up and strut away, beaming. Comfort Zone Challenge complete!

Upon discovering Comfort Zone Challenges via speaker and coach Till Gross’ TEDTalk, I knew they could quell my shyness. Akin to behavioral therapy, these challenges defeat social hesitancy through public vulnerability: basically, to overcome fears, one does scary stuff. How scary? “Lie Down for 30 Seconds” in the middle of Times Square scary. However, my subsequent adrenaline fueled me not only to survive, but to thrive in the ordeal. New York City’s atmosphere encouraged me. The life of the city—gasps of construction equipment, pulses of airtight traffic, migrations of flocking pedestrians—inspired me to contribute, in my embarrassing way, to its uninhibited eccentricity.

In Columbia, this energy permeates all. Comfort Zone Challenges, exemplars of stretching my comfort level, mirror my demanding academic ambitions. When I pursue Computer Science, I will explore the Artificial Intelligence track and investigate automated-driving solutions to traffic congestion, fuel consumption, and car-related fatalities. While the prospect of the workload is intimidating, the livelihood of New York City enthuses me. Whether within Times Square or the Mudd Building, I will pursue that which scares and excites.

Words entered: 300

For applicants to The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science, please tell us what from your current and past experiences (either academic or personal) attracts you specifically to the field or fields of study that you noted in the Member Questions section. (300 words or less)

I am a seasoned camper. However, instead of escaping to the wilderness with hiking stick in hand and s'mores supplies in a backpack, I recline on my bed with laptop in position. On freecodecamp, I am one of over 200,000 "campers" learning the art of if-then statements and Bootstrap fluid containers. An open source community of coders, Freecodecamp encourages collaboration—over chat rooms—with other computer linguists across the globe. Coding is a daily endeavor. If I am not hammering out "coding challenges" to test my newly-learned skills, I am applying my knowledge to applications and webpages.

I am an eager pupil. Alongside my computer science hobby, I undertake my Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory internship. Under the guidance of my mentor, an Aerospace engineer, I discover the complexities of aircraft flight to attack my year-long research problem on flight-control systems. Aside from individualized research, my internship provides extraordinary opportunities to further explore STEM on APL campus. Whether I'm touring the AERoFuels lab or interviewing an optical engineer on the workings of a $100 million communications satellite, my pen is frantically dancing across my notebook. I regularly trade written word for coded syntax. I apply my computational foundations towards STK software to allocate aircraft routes, towards the technical language of MATLAB to plot algorithms.

I will soon be a determined student. At Columbia, I hope take full advantage of face-to-face collaboration will fellow coders, not limited to the isolation of a chat room. I intend to concentrate my education in the field of Computer Science, or its applications in the field of Mechanical Engineering. I'm excited by the intellectual challenges of the coming years and to deepen my understanding of a world governed by laws and logic.