

YEAR IN REVIEW

Fall 2025, Fourth Semester at University of Cincinnati

August '25 – December '25

The Return to Theory: Balancing Rigor, Routine, and Resilience

"You don't have to control your thoughts. You just have to stop letting them control you." — Dan Millman

After a full year immersed in the corporate environments of Possip and Delta Air Lines, stepping back onto campus felt like entering a different dimension. For two semesters, my learning had been purely applied, governed by business needs and project deadlines. Returning to the theoretical rigor of academia was a massive shock to the system.

Bridging the Gap

My schedule was relentless, featuring heavyweight courses like Discrete Structures, Programming Languages, Operating Systems, Bayesian Data Science, and Regression Analysis. The coursework was fascinating but fractured my way of thinking. Programming Languages was heavily theoretical, a stark contrast to my daily coding at Delta. However, it taught me a permanent, invaluable skill: how to read and comprehend official documentation from scratch, fundamentally changing how I approach languages like Python.

Statistics proved to be both a playground and a puzzle. Regression Analysis was hands-on and project-based, allowing me to dive deep into R. Yet, jumping between so many languages over the years made syntax a bottleneck. I learned to leverage AI tools like Claude and ChatGPT as intellectual bridges—my logic, structure, and problem-solving methodologies were sound, and the AI simply helped translate those thoughts into executable code. Bayesian Data Science, on the other hand, shifted my entire paradigm. Focusing on the iterative process of updating priors as new data arrives, it felt like a true glimpse into modern statistical thinking.

Despite the academic success, a glaring issue emerged: knowledge retention. Alternating between classrooms and co-ops makes it incredibly difficult to retain theoretical concepts that aren't immediately applicable at work. While I was running SQL and data pipelines at Delta, I wasn't running Bayesian models. Moving forward, I realized I need to proactively build personal projects to anchor this academic knowledge, ensuring these skills don't fade the moment the final exam ends.

Life in Dabney

Finding Grounding in the Chaos I continued my Resident Advisor journey, but this time in Dabney Hall—a traditional, bare-bones dormitory. My room was incredibly small, fitting only a bed and a desk. The greatest logistical hurdle, however, was the complete lack of kitchen access. Navigating daily meals was a massive source of stress; managing a strict vegetarian diet and a severe egg allergy on a standard university meal plan without a personal kitchen tested my patience daily.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Yet, Dabney became an unexpected sanctuary. Being constantly surrounded by the chaotic, vibrant energy of freshmen was exactly what I needed. Hosting "Wednesday Connections," bringing in food, playing volleyball, and watching them experience the unbridled excitement of college Thursdays kept me grounded. Their fresh energy was a contagious relief during a semester that demanded so much of my own.

The Weight of Empathy: Mental Health and Brotherhood

The true test of Fall 2025 had nothing to do with academics. Midway through the semester, my close friend faced a severe mental health crisis that required a three-week hospitalization at UC Health.

Everything else took a backseat. Every single day, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, I was at the hospital, bringing him food, coordinating resources, and just trying to be a pillar of support. Watching someone I consider family go through such immense suffering took an incredibly heavy emotional toll on me. Prior to this, I had never fully grasped the critical importance of mental health and emotional awareness. This experience forced me to confront my own emotional bandwidth. I heavily relied on my circle of friends, who truly stepped up as my family away from home.

To survive the sheer weight of the semester, I had to enforce strict self-care routines. I began going to the gym with absolute consistency, using the physical exertion to quiet my mind and process the overwhelming emotions of the day. I also tapped into my Delta standby privileges, taking a spontaneous, much-needed trip to Alaska. Breathing in that fresh, freezing air was the perfect reset, a necessary escape to keep myself functional and present for those who needed me.

Advice to Past-Self for Present and Future Success

- **Protect Your Emotional Bandwidth:** You cannot pour from an empty cup. Your dedication to your friends is your greatest strength, but the gym, the flights, and the moments of isolation are not luxuries—they are operational necessities. Continue to treat your mental and physical health with the same rigor you apply to a 4.0 GPA.

Reflecting back Fall 2025 was a masterclass in endurance. It was a semester where the theoretical complexities of Bayesian models and Operating Systems paled in comparison to the complexities of the human mind and the responsibilities of true friendship. I learned that academic perfection is possible even amidst personal chaos, provided you establish rigid routines and lean on your community. Returning to the classroom reminded me of how much I love to learn, but the trials outside the classroom taught me how to truly take care of myself and those I love.