Attending the 2018 IEEE OES AUV Symposium – A Final Reflection

By Shashank Swaminathan

To quote the introductory paragraph of my final report on this conference:

"I attended the AUV2018 conference in Porto, Portugal to present work I had done during my gap year prior to starting classes at Olin. The work presented was on the development and usage of a computer modeling framework for underwater vehicles. The duration of the conference was from November 6th, 2018, to November 9th, 2018; I attended from November 6th to November 8th. I gave a presentation for 20 minutes on the 7th of November."

This presentation was done to a body of approximately 150 people. The pure experience itself of presenting to such a large group of knowledgeable individuals was very informative; seeing and listening to others do the same was likewise.

Specifically, what I gained through my presentation at the conference was how to effectively communicate my ideas and work to a large body of individuals who may not speak the same language as me, and may not be interested in the same topics of interest as me. What I realized, both during my preparations for the presentation and in review after it, was that I should hone in on the areas of my work that were applicable on the broader spectrum, not just to the specific niche of individuals who were directly affected by what I worked on. Furthermore, figures and diagrams greatly enhanced the presentation process – while not everyone might have the requisite background to understand exactly the details of my processes, they can definitely understand the general structures, and these can be easily conveyed via figures and the like. Lastly, results should not be presented arbitrarily and messily – it should be clear-cut and well-explained; while I tried my best to do so, I believe that I can still work on this, especially regarding making my speech more concise.

Academically, beyond just what I presented, I learned quite a lot from the work of the other attendees. For example, I was introduced to various ideas regarding underwater communication, underwater robotic systems integration, and underwater robotic system use cases. Specifically, I remember enjoying a presentation on using bathymetry to improve localization accuracy during path planning – it gave me many ideas on how to incorporate bathymetry in my own physics models of surface water dynamics.

Lastly, through my interactions with the people at the conference, I had the chance to make many connections, to various labs and professors from the US and around the world. I am currently reaching out to the connections for internships and work opportunities to further my knowledge and experience with underwater robotic systems.