

Sam Cheung Named 2008 URITC Student of the Year

Kingston, RI – The University of Rhode Island Transportation Center has named Sam Cheung its 2008 Outstanding Student of the Year in recognition of his research achievements in the area of transportation safety.

Cheung has been pursuing a master's degree in industrial and systems engineering (ISE) at the University of Rhode Island under the direction of Dr. Jyh-Hone Wang, while serving as a lieutenant in the United States Coast Guard (USCG).

Commuting to URI three days a week from his home in Oakdale, Conn., with a wife and newborn baby at home, Cheung credits the support of those around him for winning the award.

"I feel fortunate to have had the encouragement of Dr. Wang and my family," said Cheung. "This award is a testament to their support."

Cheung's research focused on the slow down effects caused by dynamic message signs (DMS), as well as the tendency of drivers to tailgate.

"By analyzing the traffic data collected by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation through mobility technology units (MTU) used in the Providence area, I was able to determine what effect the signs have on drivers," explained Cheung.

Statistics indicated that dynamic message signs cause drivers to slow down, the volume of traffic to increase and the vehicles headway distance to decrease.

Cheung received his award at the University Transportation Centers' 18th annual Outstanding Student of the Year awards banquet, held on Jan. 10 in Washington, D.C.

"I bumped into several people at the dinner that had connections to the Coast Guard," recalled Cheung. "I spoke to (former United States Secretary of Transportation) Norman Mineta, who remembered meeting me when he addressed my graduating class at the Coast Guard Academy."

With four years remaining on his commitment to serve in the Coast Guard, Cheung hopes to find a job teaching math at the Coast Guard Academy.

"I would like to show students how statistics can be applied to real-world situations, just as they were in my research at URI," stated Cheung.

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