Welcome WCS
Class of 2018

Hi! Welcome to the WCS class of 2018! This page contains pointers to resources that you might find helpful as you decide to join us here in CS@IL.

• On April 4, we are having "visit-WCS days" for admitted women, so that you can come here, see the department, meet your future peers, and realize what a fantastic choice CS@IL would be. Information and registration can be found here. Of course, the university has other Admitted Student Days, and you are welcome to visit the CS department any day; it will be best to give us some advance notice so that we can work out a schedule for you, and connect you with other students.
Be sure to connect with WCS at Illinois:
- visit the WCS home page
- Like WCS @ IL on Facebook
- Follow WCS @ IL on Twitter

For more information about the CS undergraduate program, feel free to contact the Director of Undergraduate Programs.

Visit the CS @ IL homepage

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Some current and past WCS members

We've solicited some comments from current or just-graduated students, about their reasons for choosing CS@IL, and about their experiences here.
Briana Chapman (freshman)

Why did you choose to major in CS?

You can really do anything with computer science. Whether it's art, science, music, teaching, advertising, modeling, volunteering, designing— the list goes on – there's nothing you can't revolutionize using computer science.

Why CS at Illinois?

Computer Science at Illinois is a vibrant community of people who are excited about their projects, excited about their education, excited to participate, and excited to go beyond. I'm glad I chose Illinois because it's SO easy to be inspired by everyone around me.

I did not anticipate the number of people who would walk up to me and offer me an internship on first meeting me and knowing I was a UIUC student. I did not realize how many tech talks there would be. You can listen to tech talks to your heart's content from Facebook, Google, Square, Microsoft, and Yelp, just to name a few. I also didn't anticipate the courtship from companies who are vying for your attention. I did not anticipate the amazing friendliness of the student body.

Is there a personal or class project you're excited about?

There are too many good things to talk about. I've only been here a semester and already I am involved in many projects that allow me to work directly with faculty, other students, and in community outreach. People always say that there's no 'hand-holding' at big universities; 'you're just a number to the professors.' This is not true at Illinois. Professors want to know you, they want to work with you, and they are more than willing to help you get internships and find projects that inspire you.

What are you planning to do after you graduate?

I don't know. In a way, that's the beauty of it. There are so many options it's impossible to pick as a freshman. Since computer science is growing so quickly, there's really no way to tell what fantastic options will be available when I graduate that aren't even in existence yet.

Tell us something NON-CS related that you like to do.

Is there such a thing as NON-CS related? 😊 I like to play the ukulele and guitar. I also sing. I have a small business making jewelry out of recycled materials. I am going to double major in psychology. I do photography for friends and family as a hobby.
Pooja Jain (completing MS part of combined BS/MS program)

Why CS at Illinois?

The opportunities I got at CS at Illinois were beyond what I ever imagined. Being at top 5 CS school for me meant not only access to a wealth of knowledge and resources in the form of amazing professors, students and fun in-class projects but also a chance to learn new things by exploring the really interesting and current research problems by working with professors, building exciting and cool projects outside school with students from both CS and non-CS organizations and last but not the least gaining very valuable industry experience early on through the the numerous internship opportunities available to students!

Is there a personal or class project you're excited about?

One of the first projects I ever worked on was a fun project we could choose to work on in our introduction to programming class. I worked with another student to build a simple graphical calculator in java for the introduction to programming class in freshman year. It was a simple idea and yet something very useful for the classes I took. Putting the pieces together to build a complete app was an exciting experience that left me feeling empowered.

What are you planning to do after you graduate?

It still blows my mind that I got my dream job! I'll be joining Facebook starting in August next year 😊

Tell us something NON-CS related that you like to do.

I love writing short stories and reading all kinds of books from fantasy fiction to cheesy romantic novels. When I'm not finishing my assignments, I love dancing and trying out new kinds of foods with my friends!
Ciara Proctor (junior)

**Why CS at Illinois?**

CS at Illinois has an extremely vibrant student body. There are countless student projects going on at any time and getting involved with them is as easy as asking what people are working on. Additionally, the department is filled with professors who go above and beyond to ensure that we understand the material and are taking advantage of every opportunity available to us.

**Is there a personal or class project you’re excited about?**

I’m working on a website to introduce middle school students to computer science. Working on it is extremely fulfilling. I love seeing the pieces start to come together, and the project go from an idea to a tool that can help students.

**Tell us something NON-CS related that you like to do.**

I enjoy all things Doctor Who related and baking. My favorite thing to bake are cupcakes!

Becca Byrd (sophomore)

**Why CS at Illinois?**

I'm from out of state, so when I first started applying to colleges I didn't know much about Illinois. My Physics teacher, who I've always respected, encouraged me to apply here because it was a great school for every type of engineering. I'm really glad I decided to come here, because if I'd gone somewhere that was only known for Mechanical Engineering I might never have discovered how much I love CS. Illinois is a great school because it has such a broad range of majors and minors, and every one of the engineering degrees it offers is incredibly valuable. Not only that, but the close connections the university and its student groups have with leading industries means that Illinois has some of the best internship placement opportunities of any other university I could have gone to. **If you're a bright, innovative thinker who's not sure what you want to do with your life, I can't think of a better place for you than Illinois.**

**Tell us something NON-CS related that you like to do.**

Horses! I've been riding horses with my local Girl Scout program for a long, long time now, at a summer camp near my home in Tennessee. The past couple summers I've gotten to work as a riding instructor and camp counselor, and it's been a lot of fun. Summer camp is definitely a lot more low-tech than my college life - we don't have electricity or access to any communication other than snail mail - but I love getting away from it all into the outdoors and having fun with my friends and the horses.
**Julia Syi (junior)**

*Why did you choose to major in CS?*

[My mom's] advice was basically, keep a lot of options open in case something doesn't end up working. CS has a lot of opportunities and you can literally combine it with anything you know (or have a passion for) plus you can relate a lot of daily life things to it.

*Why CS at Illinois?*

Besides the fact that UIUC is very well ranked in terms of CS... going here has allowed me to have new life experiences. There are so many smart people here, though it may seem intimidating, it's nice to share ideas with everyone and be amazed by how they think. Despite that, the range of different students here is very big. You'll definitely be able to find friends. I'm also glad about going here because I believe the people I met here are what made it possible for me to get an internship at Microsoft this summer (networking!).

*Tell us something NON-CS related that you like to do.*

I like to draw (mainly on the computer) and paint (especially with watercolors). I also enjoy dragon-boating (was the captain of my team in high school).

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**Olga Dalecka (graduated; now at Microsoft)**

*Is there a personal or class project you’re excited about?*

My favorite project was working on a senior thesis around visualizing campus sentiment, where I identified several factors that contribute to forming an opinion, and created an interactive visualization to see how each of those factors interrelated. It amazed me to see computer science applied to problems that live entirely outside of the computer and I loved the experience of building my own idea from end-to-end (for course credit!).
Lavanya Iyer (junior)

**Why did you choose to major in CS?**

I chose to major in CS because I feel that CS is helping to shape our world into a better place to live; it is up to our generation to continue and increase this influence, and solve many of the problems that plague our world today. I hope to be a significant contributor in the future towards this goal.

**Why CS at Illinois?**

I'm glad that I chose CS at Illinois because Illinois has one of the topmost CS programs in the world; and this is reflective in our course curricula and the teaching styles of our amazing professors.

**Tell us something NON-CS related that you like to do.**

In addition to majoring in CS, I have been learning Indian classical music for over 16 years and Indian classical dance for over 13 years. These two art forms are very close to me; and have immersed me more into my Indian culture. In my spare time, I like to sing, dance, play the flute, listen to music, and watch movies.

Kay Byun (junior)

**Why did you choose to major in CS?**

I actually had no idea what computer science was until I came to UIUC. I knew I liked math the most out of all classes back in high school, but also knew that I wouldn't want to do just math for the rest of my life. So I asked around and googled a lot and learned about computer science. I tried learning a language or two on my own, and I loved it!

**Is there a personal or class project you’re excited about?**

I would say making an application that users can write sheet music with a friend of mine is probably the most exciting project I have done. It was for a class, but we got to choose the project, which really motivated me to work on it. It was one of those projects that both of us learned a lot and had the most fun.

**What are you planning to do after you graduate?**

I am not exactly sure yet even though I'm already a junior. I do want to go to graduate school, so even if I work somewhere else for a bit, I would eventually try to get a higher degree.

**Tell us something NON-CS related that you like to do.**

I love music-- I would have majored in music composition if I didn't like CS so much. I am usually too busy to write anything decent in my free time, but have been taking an orchestra class, which is not only fun and relaxing, but also is a good excuse to keep practicing.
Urvashi Khandelwal (sophomore)

**Why did you choose to major in CS?**

CS is such an exciting field right now, with new developments being made every day. It is so widespread through our lives, and breakthroughs affect society as a whole. Hence, being a part of something bigger, and making my contribution to the change that drives the world is a big part of why I chose to major in CS.

**Why CS at Illinois?**

It is such a great privilege to study CS at a school like Illinois where the faculty are all pioneers in their fields. To have this opportunity to learn from some of the best, is one that I grabbed as soon as I could. The projects are fun but intense, assignments are rigorous and exams aren’t getting any easier. But that’s simply because Illinois sets the bar that high. Just a little hard work can make CS so much fun.

*Tell us something NON-CS related that you like to do.*

Apart from CS, I also really like photography. The campus is a great place to just walk around and capture all the colors and scenery. Siebel Center (the CS building), especially, is gorgeous!

Dongjing (Tina) He (grad student)

**Is there a personal or class project you’re excited about?**

During my research with Prof. Carl Gunter and Prof. Klara Nahrstedt, I constructed a sleep apnea diagnosis system based on mobile health architecture. The sleep apnea system consists of internal sensors on the smartphone and peripheral medical sensors. The system is mainly developed based on Android OS. It is a quite exciting and interesting experience to utilize my knowledge and skills to develop some real system in the medical area in order to facilitate promoting healthcare to the general public in large scale.
Andrea Fitzpatrick (junior)

**Why did you choose to major in CS?**

I have always loved doing logic puzzles ranging from twisty puzzle cubes to Sudoku puzzles. CS allows me to continue working through logic puzzles to solve useful problems that really matter.

**Why CS at Illinois?**

The CS department at Illinois is great. Everyone is so nice and friendly. I was welcomed into the department with open arms and have yet to be truly disappointed in any of the classes I have taken in the department.

*Tell us something NON-CS related that you like to do.*

I love working with my hands. I have done many metalworking projects and have experience in many different materials including steel, brass, copper, and silver.

Sonia Jahid (grad student)

**Is there a personal or class project you’re excited about?**

My research area includes security and privacy in Online Social Networks. I have worked on advanced cryptographic tools that enforce proper access control in a distributed social network. In a distributed social network, control over user data is in the user’s hand unlike current social networks, where a centralized provider (such as Facebook) controls everything. Currently I am working on using the concept of distributed social networks in healthcare domain so that I can support secure health information exchange.
Emily Tran (sophomore)

Why CS at Illinois?

The high quality academics, interesting people, and career networking opportunities. I love the campus atmosphere since there's always something fun to do, am glad to have made so many friends within WCS, and was lucky enough to hook an incredible summer internship at Microsoft my freshman year.

What are you planning to do after you graduate?

So far, I think I'd be best suited as a program manager in the software development cycle but have a lot more roles to explore.

Tell us something NON-CS related that you like to do.

Keeping up with beauty & fashion, cooking, spending time with friends, trying new things, listening to podcasts (HowStuffWorks, Freakonomics, NPR), and collecting fun resources (websites, life hacks, articles, pictures).

Mo Kudeki (graduated; now at twitter)

Any additional comments about your choice of CS?

I was delighted to find a field that allows me to both study how we interact online and actually change it. I easily united my love for music and the Internet in my senior thesis project, studying how people judge each other online based on their music taste, while an internship at Facebook ignited my love for building software that people you know communicate with every day.