WOMEN IN COMPUTING—CHANGING THE GAME

Last week I highlighted one of many clubs made available to students who are in STEM or are interested in STEM. This week I want to draw your attention to a new club that formed in the Spring of 2014. **Women in Computing** encourages women in computing and technology to engage in outreach, leadership, fellowship, and service. The club also promotes opportunities for computing careers and scholarships.

Michaela, is currently the President of Women in Computing and joined the organization after her experience at the Grace Hopper Celebration, which is the world’s largest gathering of women technologists. “I realized that women being the minority shouldn’t be the norm. Especially at UNI, the men out number the women. Bringing unity to the women in our field is something that I had never even thought about. Grace Hopper Celebration made it clear to me that we needed to bring unity mainly because I only knew one other classmate on the trip and one girl I had three classes with and never talked to. Now, I see all the women in the group in the hallways and say ‘Hi’ or have classes with them and sit by them. These two things seem simple and common in a majority of other fields, but for some reason, not in ours. I aim to change this exact problem in the computing field.”

Being president for Women in Computing has provided Michaela with organization and leadership experience. “At times it is stressful, but I remember why I am doing this and it gives me a great feeling knowing that so many people will benefit from what I am trying to promote on our campus and in our community.”

Sarah Diesburg is the faculty adviser for this organization and hopes this group will provide a sense of community that may have been missing before. “I’m very happy to be the faculty adviser for this group. I noticed there was a need for a group like this in the computer science department for both retention of our current female students and recruitment of incoming female students. I remember the time as a student when I felt a bit out of place in my undergraduate and graduate computer science departments, and having this type of group available helped me. I would like to pay that forward with our current students.”

Women in Computing members will gain valuable experience. This group reaches out to middle school students, sends women to regional and national conferences for women in computing, provides socialization events for women in their department, and educates members on professional self-promotion through resume and social networking workshops.

Sarah hopes the club’s presence in their department and community will address equity issues, “Specifically, we want to work on retention and recruitment of women into computing careers and majors. We hope our presence in the department and community will encourage women to consider computing and technology as a valid career choice, and we wish to provide an encouraging presence for female students already in these majors.”

Michaela’s favorite memory has been meeting all of the girls and having a good time. “Not only do they know how to get stuff done, but I can see them get as excited as I am to finally set out to do the events that we have discussed.”

One of Sarah’s favorite memories has been taking six female students to the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing. “The students learned so much professionally, both in computer science and in how to prepare for the next step, whether that was an internship, a job, or graduate school. We also bonded as a group.”
Women in Computing meets every other Thursday at 6:00 PM.
If you are interested in joining Women in Computing
contact:
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Pictured above: Women in Computing at the Grace Hopper Celebration