

Brittany DiGenova

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Engineering

Major(s): Computer Science

Minors(s): Media Computing

Scholar Group Membership: N/A

Did you received other funding for this project?: Computer Science Department

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: Grace Hopper Conference

Project Location: Orlando, Florida

ND Faculty Mentor: Patrick Flynn

Project Type: Conference - Attendance

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Career discernment and/or preparation

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Very Much

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Very Much

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Very Much

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Yes

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]: Yes

Tell us about your experience.

The Grace Hopper Conference was an absolutely amazing experience. GHC allowed me the opportunity to learn about the latest technologies and helped me to identify a career path in computer science that excites me. I got to listen to speakers on AI, drones, IoT, and my favorite, virtual reality. I finally saw a clear combination of all my interests when listening to a speaker from Intel who uses virtual reality, computer vision, and machine learning in combination with athletics. I also learned more about how AI and drones are being used to more efficiently water and fertilize farms. This hit home for me because I am from a small town outside Seattle with lots of farmers. The demo that they showed was from a farm 5 miles from my house! Beyond the tech talks I also felt freshly inspired by attending the keynotes. Melinda Gates, Fei Fei Li, and the founder of GoldiBlocks shared truly inspiring stories about all that they have overcome to be prominent women in tech. The most exciting part of my experience was the job opportunities it opened up for me. By being a part of GHC I got to put my resume in their database. I probably got around five emails a week from companies asking to interview me. Through Grace Hopper I got to interview with EVERY one of my top companies including Amazon, Microsoft, Google, Palantir, Nordstrom, DreamWorks, Disney, EA and a few others. This would not have been possible without the career fair and interview booths at Grace Hopper.

At the conference I had successful interviews with Disney and qualified to attend their final round interviews. I am so grateful to have had all of these opportunities through GHC.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

As mentioned above, this conference had an immense impact on my future career. I got to learn more about the big picture of why I am doing what I am doing and where I want to pursue a career in technology. I feel freshly inspired and excited about the fact that I am a woman in tech. Aside from the knowledge and inspiration acquired, the more practical things such as interviews were crucial for my future career. I took great advantage of the interview hall and career center to network with new companies as well as my peers.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

My connections began as soon as I registered for Grace Hopper. Once I was uploaded into the GHC database I constantly received emails from potential employers asking to interview. I think that they liked to see people excited about tech and taking initiative to attend Grace Hopper. I conducted interviews in the two months leading up to the conference. While I was there I got business cards and phone numbers of peers and recruiters. I met many women from my area (Seattle) where I am planning to go after graduation. These are opportunities that I would not have had without Grace Hopper as many of Notre Dame's focus and name recognition is found in the Midwest and East Coast. I conducted four interviews at Grace Hopper. The Disney interview went very well and I got invited to their after party where a small group of selected students got to listen to three of Disney and Pixar's leading animators talk about the exciting work they do. I am beyond grateful for the opportunities this conference opened up for me.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

My advice to anyone asking about Grace Hopper is without a doubt GO. For anyone regardless of whether they are looking for a job or not, there is so much to learn at GHC. The talks really help shape ones view of where technology is headed and why it is exciting. At school it is easy to get caught up in focusing on work for the sake of gaining knowledge and good grades. It is extremely easy to lose sight of the big picture. Grace Hopper helped reinvigorate my perspective and helped remind me why it is so exciting to be a woman in tech. I have become so accustomed to rooms full of men and it was very empowering to be reminded of how many strong women there are in STEM. For anyone looking for a post-grad career or career shift this conference is especially helpful. Taking advantage of the Resume database, career fair, and interview hall can lead to some wild and unexpected opportunities opening up. I am so grateful to have gone and think as many Notre Dame students as possible should attend!

I acknowledge that this form has been filled out truthfully and to the best of my ability. I understand that this information will be shared with many different CUSE constituencies. As such, I have provided as much useful information as I was able. I understand that CUSE will not

complete my award disbursement until this form is successfully completed. If I have any questions or concerns, I will contact CUSE before submitting this form. To illustrate that you understand all of these points, please enter your Notre Dame email in the box below.
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