

Name:

Women in Information and Computer Sciences (WICS), UC Irvine ACM-W Chapter

Address:

Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences

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Chapter Officers

Chair : Janay Nunez (nunezje@uci.edu)

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Faculty Sponsor

Debra Richardson (djr@ics.uci.edu), Professor Emeritus of Informatics and founding dean of the University of California–Irvine's Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences

Description:

Women in Information and Computer Sciences (WICS) is a social and professional non-profit organization at UCI established to help and encourage women to pursue a college degree and a successful career in the computer science field. We currently have around 60 active members with about over 300 unique member attendance to our events.

Students in Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences (ICS):

There are 2,366 students who belong to the Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences. Typical majors of our members are Computer Science, Computer Science & Engineering, Business Information Management, Computer Game Science, Software Engineering, Data Science, and Informatics.

Website URL: <http://wics.ics.uci.edu/>

Outstanding Community Service:

When we survey and talk to members throughout our events, we found that most were not aware of computer science and different computing fields that are available to them; they had only found out once they were admitted into college. One of the main goals of our organization is recruitment; we want to inform women about computing careers and encourage them to pursue computing. To work towards this goal, WICS has been leading a very active community outreach team. In 2017, we worked alongside the local Woodbridge High School's Girls Who Code Club to create [AspireIT](#), funded by a \$3000 grant from the National Center for Women and Information Technology. In addition, our outreach team acquired an \$8790 grant from Google to host the [IgniteCS](#) program for a third year.

[AspireIT](#) is a program consisting of a series of app development workshops to introduce middle school students to computing. We recruited 11 mentors (college and high school students) and 35 students from Lathrop Intermediate School. [AspireIT](#) students had the opportunity to practice essential coding and product development skills using MIT's Scratch, JoyLabz Makey Makey Boards, and MIT's App Inventor and showcased a culminating project at the end. Some of these creative projects include a Tom and Jerry chase game, getting your fortune told by a fortune cookie, a rocket game that shot aliens in space, and making music using petals from a flower character in the popular 2D game Undertale. We also invited guest speakers from Amazon to help us break down stereotypes and educate the students on real opportunities in the industry.

[IgniteCS](#) is another program that introduces computing, geared towards high school students, and employs Scratch, Makey Makey Boards, and a programming language (Python or Processing). In the past two years, we hosted this program at La Quinta High School. We found that high school students barely knew about computer science; instead, most were motivated to go into fields like medicine and physical sciences based on their parents' recommendations. To resolve this, we designed a curriculum that begins with block programming and ends with learning an actual programming language. Like [AspireIT](#), these students would use what they learned to create a project based on their own interests. This was the key - students realized that they could incorporate their hobbies and interests into computing. This made computer science much more fun and exciting to pursue.

While both of these programs targeted K-12 students, we found that our mentors themselves had an enriching experience working with these students and learning how to teach computer science concepts in a fun and approachable manner. This shows in the number of mentor applications we receive each year - in the first year of [IgniteCS](#), we had 8 mentor applications; that number jumped to 80 in our third year. We hope that through our continued efforts, our mentors will inspire the next generation of mentors, such that over time, computer science will be included in the K-12 curriculum.