

Chapter Name: GRACE – Girls Rocking Algorithms, Computing, and Electronics

Chapter Address:

Concordia University Wisconsin
Department of Computer Science
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Student Officers:

President: Emily Marciniak (emily.marciniak@cuw.edu)

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Faculty and Staff Organizers:

Faculty Sponsor: Antoinette Spencer (antoinette.spencer@cuw.edu)

Faculty Co-Sponsor: Joshua Locklair (joshua.locklair@cuw.edu)

Vice-Chair: Valerie Locklair (valerie.locklair@cuw.edu)

Description of Chapter and School

Concordia University Wisconsin is a Lutheran higher education community committed to helping students develop in mind, body, and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and the World. The Computer Science department at CUW approaches Computer Science and Information Technology as liberal arts worthy of study and capable of facilitating a holistic view of knowledge, service, and opportunity. GRACE was formed in order to support, encourage, and recruit women into the exciting field of computer science. This is an exciting time for CS at CUW. Prof. Antoinette Spencer was recently welcomed as the first female professor of computer science. The system administrator, Valerie Locklair, is the first woman to hold that position. Prof. Josh Locklair has been instrumental in the creation, chartering, and sustainment of GRACE at CUW.

The Computer Science department currently has 96 Computer Science and Information Technology majors and minors. Many more students take CS and IT courses. Our department has 5 full time faculty members.

The department has been passionate about creating an atmosphere that welcomes women and the unique strengths and abilities that they bring to the field.

GRACE has 18 confirmed members and welcomes many more individuals to its monthly events. Chapter members are typically computer science or information technology majors or minors, or graduate students studying in the master's in Information Technology or master's in Computer Science programs.

GRACE Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/cuwgrace>

Outstanding Chapter Activities

The idea of GRACE began with three computer science professors and one staff member who were brainstorming ways to advocate and support women in technology. It's amazing that from this humble beginning GRACE was successfully chartered by both the ACM-W and CUW's Student Government Association in only a few brief months. Three months after successful chartering, GRACE hosted its most popular event: Maze Runner: The Robot Trials.



The brains behind the operation: (from L to R): Faculty Co-Sponsor Prof. Josh Locklair, Treasurer Alexis Rolenc, Vice-Chair Valerie Locklair, and President Emily Marciniak. Back Row: Faculty Sponsor Prof. Antoinette Spencer.

The Robot Trials event was loosely based on the popular series *The Maze Runner*, and the event was a time of fun, fellowship, and food. Over 75 individuals

were in attendance, including traditional undergraduate students, students in the IT graduate program, staff members, and students currently studying abroad at Concordia. Attendees had the opportunity to explore our department's resident robots: Ozobots and an animatronic dinosaur! Teams competed with Ozobots to see which robot could run a maze the fastest. Not only were attendees able to investigate *how* robots like the Ozobots work, but they were able to socialize with like-minded women in a friendly, welcoming, and encouraging environment.



GRACE President Emily Marciniak (L, back row), Faculty Co-Sponsor Prof. Josh Locklair, and Treasurer Alexis Rolenc (front) are all smiles while the department's official dinosaur does its best Griever impersonation.

A large part of the Robot Trials' success was its on-campus promotion. Blessed with a creative bent and a knack for public relations, professors Antoinette Spencer and Josh Locklair created full-color posters to hang around campus. Computer Science students were invited to attend and bring a friend (or five!). Because of GRACE's SGA approval at CUW, the organization acquires funds that can be used for events. Although the department already had the robots that were used, dinner and dessert was provided for attendees – though cost was kept to a minimum by providing hot-and-ready pizza and ice cream.



GRACE members (from L to R) Katelyn Smith, Kristin Jahnke, Vice-Chair Valerie Locklair, and Brittany Klumpp race Ozobots while the department's resident dinosaur watches intently... !

The hands-on nature of the event offered something for everyone. For those wishing to meet new people and find out more about Computer Science, GRACE officers were standing by to speak with them. For those who wanted to spend time investigating the robots, we had a quieter area where they could create their own mazes for own line-following robots, investigate the Ozobot components, and read about how the robots worked. For others, we had pre-made mazes for the Ozobots to navigate – but maze runners had to watch out for the animatronic dinosaur, which, manned by a mischievous attendee, would occasionally tromp onto the maze and try to distract the robots! With the huge success of this event, GRACE is excited for the future and inspired to continue supporting, encouraging, and advocating for the advancement of women in computing.