

Student

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### Reaching Computer Science

Reflecting on what makes us who we are and how we reached the current make up of our lives is always an interesting and introspective process, almost like observing the butterfly effect. Whether we realize it or not, we're influenced by our own decisions, those around us, and the circumstances of our environment. In my case, my approach was touched by teachers, family members, and classes I've taken. This is how I got to be a senior Computer Science major with a minor in Scientific and Technical Communication. Let's begin at the first place I can pinpoint my exposure to computer science related elements, senior year of high school.

In high school there weren't a lot of classes advertising computer science as a career choice or anything resembling computer science/ programming in general. There was a trade-like school I could've commuted to for half of the morning, but I hadn't yet found my liking for learning about computers and the disciplines revolving around them. By the time I did, it wasn't a viable option. It ended up being that, after some digging, there was a computer coding class that dealt with building websites/ webpages with HTML and CSS, otherwise known as cascading style sheets. It was taught by my sophomore-year geometry teacher. The class was fun, neat in how you could build a working, interactive website for people to use by writing lines of code. At that point, however, it didn't occur to me that this was something I could pursue in college. Since there weren't any other concrete classes involving programming, there wasn't much to drive me towards it in my second semester of senior year. Two of the guys in my class slot were doing a

sort of independent study type class using Dreamweaver, a popular website building IDE/software. However, the teacher in charge of the HTML class hadn't really advertised it as an option to any of us. I suppose if I had more initiative or reason to have interest I may have considered it, but it just didn't really catch my attention. Luckily, I would gain a much better exposure to computer science at my first college, Cottey College.

Sometime before I had graduated, I was accepted to attend school at Cottey College, a small, mostly two-year school in Nevada, Missouri. Originally, it had been my intention to pursue a degree in Graphic Design, so that meant getting an associate's degree in art, given there were only bachelor degrees in English, Psychology, and Business. Before going to college, my mom gave me an ultimatum of sorts. I could get the degree I wanted but I had to get a minor in computer science. She wanted me to be able to have a fallback in a lucrative field in case graphic design didn't bring in enough funds to live on, so I readily agreed. That meant focusing on taking the programming courses there, of which there were only a handful. I did luck out in that my faculty advisor was the computer science teacher, the only computer science teacher actually. This made things simultaneously hard and easy, given how often I had to interact with her. When it comes down to it, maybe the reason I was turned on to computer science was because of how much enthusiasm my teacher had for coding and the discipline. Maybe it was that coupled with the rekindling of my interest in building programs that made me contemplate diverging from the major I had originally decided. Either way I found myself loving coding, the amazing feeling of putting hard work into hundreds of lines of code and then having it work. The ability to build useful, even helpful, programs sparked a love I still carry with me. The newfound love of computer science meant switching to an Associate's degree in science, and while it's not explicitly stated on my degree, I focus on computer science classes. A Cottey faculty member

was also responsible for my current choice in minor. My first year English professor, Dr. Stubblefield, encouraged me to pursue a minor in English in a note written on the back of one of my assignment drafts in green pen with a smiley face scribbled next to it. It was flattering and I'll admit it made me smile, but I wasn't sure. I was convinced I didn't have what it took to pursue anything in the English department. Thus, at the time, I didn't take the suggestion to heart but, low and behold, I am now minoring in Scientific and Technical Communication from the English department at Bowling Green State University. This leads us to my current place of education.

After graduating from Cottey in Spring 2016, I transferred to Bowling Green State University. Coming here I did have to fulfill a few of the BGP requirements because some of my credits did not transfer due to the fact that BG either didn't have an equivalent or based upon the fact that Ohio schools are only required to accept all credits from an in-state school. Another obstacle, though not too bad, was that I had to learn a new coding language because at Cottey we'd been taught Java whereas Bowling Green teaches the classes mainly using C++. This did result in me auditing the first of the core classes, CS2010, because I was unsure of jumping ahead to the more advanced class without knowing anything about the language. Needless to say, I have been successful in integrating the different language into my programming knowledge. Currently, I'm still more than happy in the major I have chosen to stick with. Additionally, my minor is continuing to go smoothly, especially with the ideas I've gained in ENG2070. Being made to think about different approaches to subject matter and ideas is helpful in that when you write as a technical writer does, you have to be able to understand and translate the necessary information between different levels of knowledge or branches of production in a business.

All of the shifts and changes I have faced in my journey from that HTML class in high school to where I am now at Bowling Green University have served to change my perspective on what I want to do with my life. I've found that I truly enjoy programming and the concepts that computer science employs. It feels good to have found that fit, and to have a minor that complements it so well. It's odd to think about where I would be now if my mom hadn't pushed for a minor in computer science or if my English teacher hadn't encouraged me to pursue more English courses. Looking back on where I've come from and how I've reached the point I'm currently at in life gives me perspective on how we influence each other and the world around us and vice versa. It's really something intricate and wonderful to behold.