Women In Computer Science at CUNY
--- Problems and Solutions

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Abstract

Our research concentrates on different aspects of the CUNY Computer Science environment that involve the professional development and gender issues of female graduate students, professors and research staff. As we all know, computer science is a challenging, competitive, and difficult subject for both men and women. However, women have made fundamental and unique contributions to computer science from the early history of computers and up to the present. The last twenty years have played marginal role for women in computer science and technology. Women are making progress and gaining equal treatment from society. However, there still exist a major number of differences between men and women in the field of computer science and technology.

A key objective of our research is to identify courses of action and areas where academia can provide significant progress towards the goal of bringing and retaining more women to the computer science field. We tried to discover the problems of women facing in CS and find the solutions that enable them to grow both professionally and personally.

Our studies in the summer of year 2002 prove that there is a definite lack of women in the computer science field. The survey of CUNY female professors that we conducted clearly shows that not even 30% of teachers in the field of computer science are women. These figures are alarming and unfortunately, this problem is generally consistent with that of other scientific and engineering fields. Increasing the number of female faculty members is one of the solutions that will result in female students being encouraged more. Female students will feel more comfortable in the academic environment and will gain more self-esteem.

Many women in CS encounter particular problems that limit their academic, professional, and personal growth nowadays. What are the problems? How did they solve the problems? What is the definition of a success as a female? Why is there a gender gap in computer science? From our survey, it shows that there are two primary and consistent challenges that women face in pursuing their PhD degrees:

- Pressures encountered.
- Difficulties in balancing career and family responsibilities.

Even thought computer science is a very competitive and challenging subject. However, our survey shows that not only PhD Students but also female professors still found their life excitement and adventure in their chosen field.