

WICS@FIU REPORT of March 9, 2004

This organization was founded in the fall of 2001 by Dr. Ana Pasztor. It's original name was School of Computer Science Women's Support Group. I was founded with the occasion of a mini-conference sponsored by Lucent Technologies and the Women's Chapter of the Computing Research Association (CRA-W). The mini-conference consisted of a lecture by a distinguished lecturer from Lucent Technologies, followed by a panel of female graduate student, faculty, and alumni, who discussed issues related to graduate studies in computer science. The goal was to pursue women to continue on to graduate school to earn a Master's or a Ph. Degree.

From its beginnings, the group has had a website (www.cs.fiu.edu/scswomen) that allows members to sign up for tutoring. Members have been receiving free tutoring on a regular basis any time they sign up for help.

In the fall of 2003, the Group became a formal organization with over 80 members, 9 officers, and one faculty advisor, and a number of support people, such as tutors. Its name is WICS@FIU (Women in Computer Science at FIU), and it is member of SOC. Please find the WICS Constitution in the Appendix.

The WICS office is in ECS 280B, tel.

Since October, 2003, WICS has had a meeting on each Friday that was not a holiday or vacation. Besides providing regular tutoring to our members and attending all SOC meetings and seminars, we organized and sponsored the following events:

- Oct. 3, 2003, Stephanie Strange, the faculty advisor of Motorola Women in Engineering at FIU, visits WICS to introduce her Group and link up with WICS
- Oct. 15, 2003, visit to Motorola WIE
- Nov. 1, 2003, WICS party
- Nov. 6, 2003, WICS officers meet with Sheila Henry, Program Manager Extreme Blue (internship program) and Daisy Santana, IBM Program Director (our IAB Ambassador)
- Nov. 13 and 14, 2003, WICS co-hosts Dr. Laura Dillon from Michigan State University. On the 13th WICS officers had dinner with her to discuss women's issues in the academia. On the 14th she gave a seminar on "Oracles for Checking Temporal Properties of Concurrent Systems."
- Nov. 18 and 19, 2003, FIU-wide bake-sale
- Dec. 16, 2003, joint ACM-WICS graduation and award party
- Toy drive and toy delivery on Dec. 22, 2003, to New Horizons Community Mental Health Center children
- Toy drive and toy delivery on Dec. 23, 2003, Jackson Memorial Hospital children
- Jan. 16, 2004, Dr. Diann Newman gives Irrational Beliefs mini-workshop, FIU-wide
- Jan. 23, 2004, WICS officers visit Dr. Adjouadi's CATE lab in Engineering
- Jan. 23, 2004, HANDS ON LINUX seminar series starts. It is held *every* Friday 2-3pm.

- Jan. 27, 2004, SOC Club Fair
- Feb. 6, 2004, Dr. Ana Pasztor shows video, "Einstein's Wife," and leads discussion afterwards. FIU-wide event.
- Feb. 20, 2004, Dr. Ana Pasztor gives mini-workshop I on Learning Skills to WICS members
- March 12, 2004, Dr. Ana Pasztor gives mini-workshop II on Learning Skills to WICS members
- March 19, 2004, ACM-WICS joint SCS-wide party
- March 26, 2004, ACM-WICS joint programming competition for South Florida area high schools
- April 2, 2004, Dr. Maria Elena Smith from IBM Boca Raton will speak to WICS and then give a talk to the SCS community on Text-to-Speech Technology.

Presently, WICS also has proposals pending at Goldman Sachs, IBM, and Motorola for a Tutoring lab for women in CS.

We are also preparing to administer a survey to all students of the SCS to find the particular needs and attitudes of women in computer science.

We will put the BS Program Objectives and Educational Outcomes on our website, and invite WICS members to comment on each item.

So far, I have received the following feedback from WICS members regarding our BS Program:

- Students would like to have a CS survey/overview class before taking the specialty classes.
- Regarding the undergraduate lab, there are many complaints that the lab rules are not being enforced, since the supervisors are students themselves and there is a conflict of interest. Specifically, male students watch and comment on porno sites, and bring porno pictures to the lab, showing them around. Some women feel uncomfortable and harassed. The idea came up to have a complaint box in the lab.
- Students complained about registering for a class listed as being taught by a specific instructor, but then the instructor being changed later. Students want to be able to choose the instructor they have class with.
- The greatest number of concerns were related to professors' attitudes, such as not answering e-mails, assigning group work without teaching them team management (usually one student does the work and the others just profit), embarrassing students in class, being arrogant, and not listening to students concerns.

One idea that came up is to have a SCS cafeteria or lounge. The argument is that if we had a cafeteria/lounge in our building, CS student could meet to socialize, and also each CS organization could have a bulletin board or a table (representatives) so that the student could learn more about the organization and join them. Also, if professors went to the

same cafeteria, they could also come closer to the students, and students would feel more comfortable asking for help.

Students also expressed the need for a course in which real industry problems were discussed and solved. It would prepare students for the industry. In the same class, student who already have a job, could share their experiences with other student by talking about the problems they faced and how they dealt with them.

Appendix

WICS at Florida International University Constitution

PREAMBLE:

We, the members of the Women in Computer Science (WICS) at Florida International University, hereby associate ourselves for the following:

PURPOSE:

- to foster retention of women in the School of Computer Science by building women's confidence in their overall skills needed to succeed in their profession as computer scientists;
- to motivate current undergraduates to pursue graduate study in computer science;
- to attract high school girls and incoming women students to pursue a degree in the computer science field;
- to provide opportunities for female students to network with women professionals in the field.

MISSION:

While women have joined the field of computer science in increasing numbers over the past 20 years, the percentage of women in the Computer Science field continues to be low. Only twenty percent of the FIU School of Computer Science undergraduate students are female. Admittedly, the field presents each individual that enters it great challenges that are not found in traditional fields, but in return, the benefits it provides far out-weigh these challenges. Nevertheless, many women students drop out of computer science and switch to less technical disciplines. We believe that some of the reasons for the high attrition rate of women in computer science are: difficulties encountered with the present curriculum, demanding family or work responsibilities, and the shortage of female role models within the faculty.

Our mission is to create more opportunities for women in the School of Computer Science in order for them to succeed and to attract additional female students to the field by creating a nurturing environment that will provide academic, professional, and emotional support.

GOALS:

- (a) To develop and maintain an undergraduate tutoring lab for women students in the School of Computer Science;
- (b) To provide mentoring to incoming female students majoring in computer

- science;
- (c) To invite alumni and professional women working in the field of computer science to speak to women students at the School of Computer Science;
 - (d) To seek funding and offer women undergraduates in the School of Computer Science the opportunity to attend professional and academic conferences;
 - (e) Communicate with the faculty of the School of Computer Science about women's curriculum needs; and
 - (f) To reach out to the public school community and encourage female students to join the Computer Science program.

Article I: NAME

The name of this organization shall be Women in Computer Science (WICS) at Florida International University.

Article II: MEMBERSHIP

Section A:

The membership of WICS shall be open to all Florida International University female students with interest in Computer Science, who unite to promote our common interests.

Section B:

The WICS faculty advisor is Dr. Ana Pasztor, who is a faculty member in the School of Computer Science at Florida International University.

Section C:

WICS membership is free and open to all female students at Florida International University interested in Computer Science. Membership is gained by joining the WICS mailing list.

Section D:

WICS members have the right to resign from the organization at any time by choosing to unsubscribe to the WICS mailing list. WICS officers have the right to resign their position by official letter to the president and the faculty advisor.

Article III: OFFICERS

Section A:

The officers (or leaders) of this organization shall be:

1. Co-Presidents
2. Secretary
3. Treasurer
4. Event Organizers
5. Webmasters
6. Study Group Coordinator

7. Visitor and Lecture Coordinator
8. Graduate Student Liaison/Mentor
9. Director of Fundraising
10. Faculty Advisor
11. Faculty Members

Section B:

All officers shall be undergraduate or graduate students who are in the School of Computer Science at Florida International University.

Article IV: MEETINGS

Section A:

WICS meeting are held during the school term every week on Fridays and is open to all who wish to attend. WICS meeting information will be posted on the WICS website, <http://www.cs.fiu.edu/scswomen>.

Article V: COMMITTEES

Section A:

WICS contains no committees.

Article VI: PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

Robert's Rules of Order shall be used in all situations not covered by provisions of this constitution.

Article VII: AMENDMENTS

Section A:

Amendment to this constitution shall be submitted to president, and faculty advisor in writing for submission to the member for a vote.

Section B:

A 2/3 (or majority vote) vote of organizational members present at a specified meeting shall suffice for adoption.

Section C:

A copy of new amendments is to be given to the Student Activities Department no later than one week after adoption. The amendment will be placed in the club's permanent file.