The Ohio State University: ACM-W Trip Report

From October 19th - 21st, eleven members of Ohio State's ACM-W chapter joined over 15,000 women technologists in Houston, Texas for the 2016 Grace Hopper Celebration Conference. The GHC Conference is the world's largest conference for women in computing bringing together students, researchers, and industry professionals to learn, connect, and inspire.

From left to right: Sophie DeRosa, Claudia Moeller, Claudia Hinkle, Winnie Li, Mary Catherine Good, Maria Emery, Emily Engle, Kirsten Boni, Protiva Rahman. Not Pictured: Edrienne Co and Caitlyn Horn

Association for Computing Machinery

ANITA BORG INSTITUTE

The Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing is presented by the Anita Borg Institute for Women in Technology and the Association for Computing Machinery.

At a glance

Grace Hopper Celebration Conference 2016

3 days

1100+ organizations

15,000+ attendees

600+ speakers

80 countries represented

200+ sessions

ACM-W at Ohio State University

11 attendees from ACM-W

1 PhD student, 3 Seniors, 3 Juniors, 4 Sophomores

Scholarship recipients from:
Google
Microsoft
Facebook
StateFarm through the Anita Borg Institute

University Support

The Department of Computer Science and Engineering
College of Engineering
Undergraduate Student Government

Industry Support

Harris Corporation
Marathon Petroleum

Conference Summary

Opening Keynote

On Wednesday morning, GHC16 kicked off with opening keynotes from LaTanya Sweeney and Ginni Rometty.

LaTanya Sweeney, Professor at Harvard University; Editor-in-Chief of Technology Science and Director and founder of Data Privacy Lab, spoke on the importance of data privacy and the impact of technology in shaping the way we live our lives.

She spoke of a personal story, where she was falsely accused of being arrested due to online search results from her name, demonstrating the societal impacts technology can have and also the kind of discrimination it can perpetuate. Dr. Sweeney urged the audience to use technology to solve problems and advocate for diversity on all levels.

Ginni Rometty, the first female President and CEO of IBM, concluded the ceremony by sharing her personal stories and leaving us with three lessons to live by:
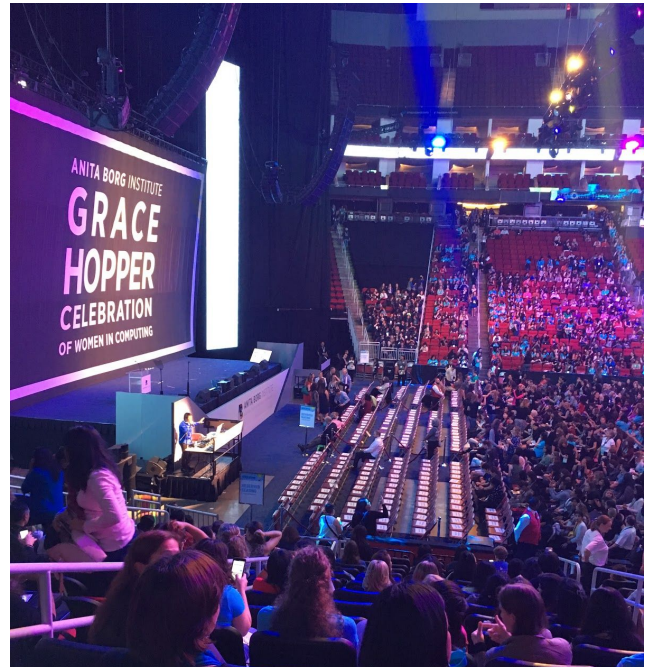
1. Never, ever let someone else define you.
2. Growth and comfort never coexist.
3. Work on something you're passionate about. Work on something that's bigger than yourself to make the world a better place.

"Hearing someone like Ginni tell us that 'The women before you have only paved the way for the amazing things that you will do' - that's unbelievably inspiring. That's the extra push that convinces a woman that she should speak up because her ideas have merit too. That's the extra voice of encouragement to a young girl that isn't sure she belongs in computer science."

- *Emily Engle, B.S. CSE 2019*

"Attending the Grace Hopper Conference 2016 was such a unique and wonderful experience. Being surrounded by 15,000 other women in the same field was inspiring because it made it seem that you are not alone in your efforts and that all the late night study sessions are worth it. Hearing all the different women speak about their accomplishments was inspiring, and motivating to continue to work hard. Attending the Grace Hopper Conference was an excellent idea and it opened me up to many more avenues in computer science."

- *Mary Catherine Good, B.S. CSE 2019*

Conference Sessions

The next few days consisted of workshops, track sessions, and presentations for attendees to grow their technical skills, develop professionally and expand their knowledge on computing trends around the world.
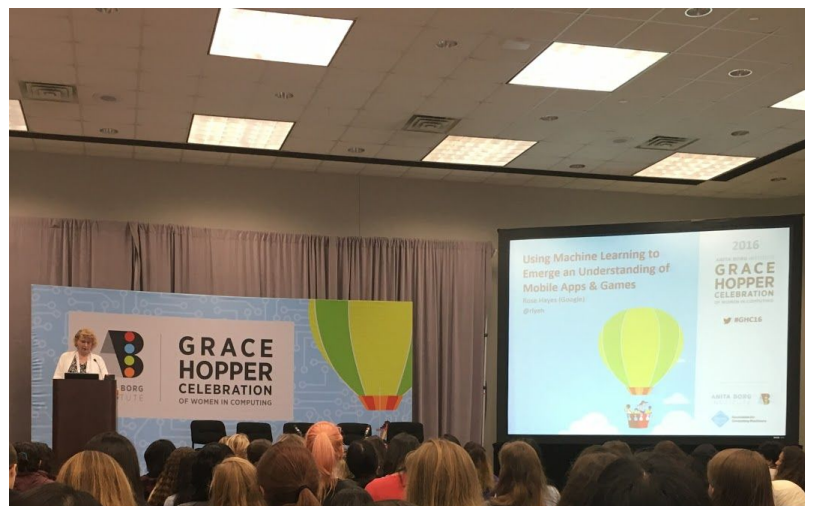
Topics and track sessions, which included data science, internet of things, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and many more, provided insights to what the latest technology has to offer and various ways women can become involved to shape these trends. Many workshops and talks also aimed to help women find the right career path and to explore different opportunities. Some of our member favorites included a panel with Google X female engineers, a workshop on using Data Science for Social Good, Deep Learning for Text Recognition, Building your Professional Network and How to Harness the Power of Introverts.

"Attending GHC for the first time as a second year PhD student, I was unsure of what to expect. At this point in my career, I was mainly looking for a direction to focus my dissertation on and the experience definitely left me inspired. The speed mentoring session with faculty members as well as industry professionals was especially helpful for getting one on one advice on idea generation and academic career trajectories."

-   Protiva Rahman, PhD CSE Student

Jeff Dean, known for his works on Google Brain and MapReduce, shared at a researcher's lunch with student Protiva Rahman, that he thinks the future of AI is in having a semantic web where every physical object has an identifier.

Workshop on "Using Machine Learning to Emerge and Understanding of Mobile apps and games"

Career Expo

The 3 day long Career Expo offered attendees the chance to explore various career opportunities from over 300 different organizations including some of the world's most influential companies, startups, nonprofits, and government sectors. Representatives from higher education programs were also in attendance along with researchers to provide attendees the chance to explore graduate school programs, interdisciplinary research and other academia paths.

"The most valuable thing I took away from GHC were the connections I made there, with both other students and more experienced professionals. What was most striking was the overwhelming sense of openness at the conference. At every panel I attended, I was able to chat with the women around me, and nobody cared who was a student or professional, or which school or company you came from. . Attending Grace Hopper didn't just help me get interviews and face-to-face contact with top companies committed to diversity in their workforces, it also gave me the tools and the confidence I need to do well in those interviews"

- Claudia Hinkle, B.S. CSE 2018

Hundreds of companies recruiting women technologist at the 3 day long career expo.

"I loved going to Grace Hopper because I got to network with fellow women in technology. It was really awesome talking to other students, it helped to eliminate the imposter syndrome I usually experience. The opportunities at Grace Hopper were endless as well--talks and the career fair, for example. And, I was able to bring back what I learned from the conference to help other girls in CS!"

- Kristin Boni, B.S. CSE 2018, Anita Borg State Farm Scholar

Closing Keynote

The final day of GHC16 closed with keynotes by **Marc Bennioff**, president and chairman of Salesforce, and **Megan Smith,** the CTO of the United States of America. Bennioff and Smith spoke on how leaders and peers alike from the community need to open up conversations on tackling the gender balance issue. Both speakers recognized the issue as a multi-faceted problem which must be addressed from various levels. Gender equality needs more than just the push of women technologists. This much needed change requires the participation of the entire community, with collaboration between university administrators, government officials and industry leaders.

"Being surrounded by 15,000+ women in tech around the world re-energized me to push myself and find something I am passionate for. It made all of my aspirations seem a bit more reachable and my fears a little less prevalent. It's inspiring to see these women and tech companies working to create an inclusive environment where women technologists can thrive. Technology is empowering. It's a tool for change and we need to continue this progress so that every person has the opportunity to make a difference in the world."

- ***Winnie Li, B.S. CSE 2017, Microsoft Scholar***

ACM-W Lasting Impact

ACM-W, the women's chapter of the Association of Computing Machinery, aims to encourage and support women in technology through focused efforts on professional and personal development, community building, and outreach programs. With the support from the College of Engineering, the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, and the Undergraduate Student Government, ACM-W was able to further its mission from attending the Grace Hopper Celebration Conference.

Members came back with a new sense of confidence, tools for personal growth, and the motivation to find and craft unique paths to achieve their highest ambitions. These benefits go beyond individual growth and in fact affects the larger Ohio State community. It is difficult to inspire and guide others, if one suffers from self-doubt. Every woman who attended GHC returned with a sense of belonging and purpose. They can, in turn inculcate these feelings to other women in technology, who are unsure about if they belong in the field. ACM-W members have further opened channels of opportunities for the community by building connections with researchers, industry professionals, and students from all over the world.

ACM-W attendees have realized a responsibility to fight the prejudices that enforce the gender gap, encourage interest in those held back by self-doubt and misconceptions, and increase retention by creating supportive networks. With their different perspectives, backgrounds, and ideas, members can build each other up and take their unique insights to advance towards a more inclusive tech community.

"Ask people to name tech leaders and most, if not all, of the names will be male. I remember first entering computer science full of self-doubt because there was no one that looked like me. GHC aims to remold such perceptions by, as the name suggests, celebrating the achievements of women in computing, past and present. I heard amazing tech leaders from different companies, nonprofits, and universities present tech talks and stories about overcoming adversity. All these interactions and dialogues equipped me with the knowledge to foster a more engaging, sustainable support network for Ohio State women in computing. More importantly, it was a much needed reminder that I belong in this field and can succeed."

- Edrienne Co. B.S. CSE 2017, Google Scholar

Website: http://acmw.org.ohio-state.edu/

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Learn more: ACM-W 2015 - 2016 Report

About GHC: http://ghc.anitaborg.org/