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Coming into Cornell as an undecided freshman, I was set on looking for a major that I fit into, and after some introductory computer science courses my first year, I latched onto this study of problem solving, debugging perseverance, and technical inquiry.

While I was initially unsure of my specific major, I knew that I wanted to stay within engineering. Coming in, I already knew of the imbalance of women in engineering, so I joined the Society of Women Engineers and I served as the chair for Career Development within SWE. As a chair I am focused on promoting, supporting, and retaining women in technology and helping in any way I can to further their career success. Specifically, the Career Development team runs the Professional Networking Dinner, which is focused on connecting Cornell women (and all other students) with recruiters and engineers from over 50 companies. I also joined WICC’s mentorship program as a mentee, and I am excited to rejoin the program next year as a mentor in order to share my experiences as well as help guide underclassmen in navigating Cornell and the CS industry.

Despite the CS community at Cornell being welcoming, there are always ways to develop a more inclusive and equal community. Inspired by strengthening the community of women in computing, in a team of 5, we built a networking web application that would help create and foster mentor and mentee connections with women currently in the industry at a hackathon. Since then I have been increasingly determined to find ways to utilize my skills in order to promote and support women in tech.

This year has been especially encouraging as the Cornell CS community has put much emphasis on examining inequality in computer science. From community discussions, to published Medium articles, to just honest conversations with my friends and peers, my opinions and understanding of the state of women in technology have expanded and matured. Yet, as a sophomore without concrete experience of the industry culture of the tech world, I am torn between many of the views presented of women in technology. However, computer science has given me the opportunity to create new things and the ability to tackle problems ranging from politics to biology, with a distinct approach. The responsiveness and flexibility demonstrated by the Cornell CS community this year has proven it is possible to change this current culture of exclusion. GHC will not only provide a deeper technical understanding for my career, but also the essential leadership foundation and community network necessary to continue to drive change in creating a healthy culture for the computer science field. I aim to take the messages and ideas of how to progress the current culture of CS presented at the conference and implement and spread them among the Cornell community. Altogether, I plan to continuously emulate the driven attitudes held collectively at GHC in hopes of encouraging those around me to be equally as bold in pursuing their future.