

Reflections on a Dickinson Education

The first time I arrived at Dickinson, I was filled with excitement, anticipation, and a tinge of apprehension. Like many teenagers, I was uncertain about what I would study and what my future career might hold. Doubts about my abilities, particularly in subjects like math and science, made my initial experience at Dickinson a mixture of trepidation and hope. Additionally, growing up, I had internalized gender stereotypes that portrayed heavy science majors like Computer Science and Math as reserved for men, further emphasizing my insecurities. Little did I know that within Dickinson's liberal arts environment, these assumptions would be shattered, leading to a transformative journey of self-discovery and empowerment. In this paper, I will share more about my academic pursuits and the profound impact of exploration and self-discovery on my personal and intellectual growth, thanks to Dickinson's education.

Back in my hometown, women pursuing computer science were often met with skepticism and faced gender stereotypes. I was frequently told that STEM fields were not suitable for women and that I lacked the innate ability to succeed in these fields. These pervasive stereotypes cast a shadow of doubt over my aspirations and fueled my apprehensions about taking classes like computer science or data science. However, upon arriving at Dickinson College, I was pleasantly surprised to find an environment that defied these stereotypes. Here, everyone was encouraged to pursue their passions in every field, including STEM majors, without fear of judgment or discrimination. The inclusive and supportive community at Dickinson provided me with the platform to challenge these preconceived notions and redefine my capabilities.

As I mentioned, my journey at Dickinson College began with uncertainty and insecurity about my abilities, particularly in science subjects, partly due to societal expectations and my own insecurities. Despite initially opting for economics as my major, I struggled to find the passion and spark, and the belief that I lacked aptitude for science subjects only reinforced my doubts. However, Dickinson College offered me the freedom and flexibility to explore a diverse range of subjects. Stepping out of my comfort zone, I enrolled in Computer Science 130, a class that would transform my studies and future career path. Despite a few challenges when learning a new language and understanding the logic of coding, I soon realized that Computer Science was not solely about mathematics and technicalities. It was a field that demanded problem-solving skills, creativity, and critical thinking, which resonated deeply with me.

The transformative impact of Dickinson College, particularly in Computer Science 130 with Professor Lev, cannot be overstated. Freed from the constraints imposed by societal expectations and personal insecurities, I began my journey of exploration and self-discovery. Dickinson's education empowered me to challenge stereotypes and embrace my passion for computer science, which I never thought I could learn. Professor Lev's guidance and course materials played a crucial role in reshaping my perceptions and beliefs about my abilities. I began to envision myself in a brighter future, working and pursuing a path I enjoy, with endless possibilities and opportunities for growth.