COLLEGE OF INFORMATION STUDIES

iSchool Identity Team(t5) Portfolio

Joanne Lee, Naman Phadnis,
Bhagyashree Phadnis, James Kennedy,
Anat Szendro Sevilla, Sumit Kansagra

Advisor: Dr. Wayne Lutters

Our Research Process:

Contextual Interviews

▼

Interpertation Session

▼

Modeling

▼

Design ideas

Modeling

1 AFFINITY DIAGRAM

The Affinity Diagram organizes the data collected in the Contextual Interviews into a hierarchy of themes and issues by brainstorming.

The affinity diagram process allowed our group to move beyond our habitual thinking and preconceived categories.

2 IDENTITY MODEL

Divided into three sections: I want- What these identities are looking for, I am- What makes these identities who they are, I like- What are the things that these identities appreciate and like.

Using these identities, we can better understand who we are designing for and what the students in and out of iSchool feel about the program.
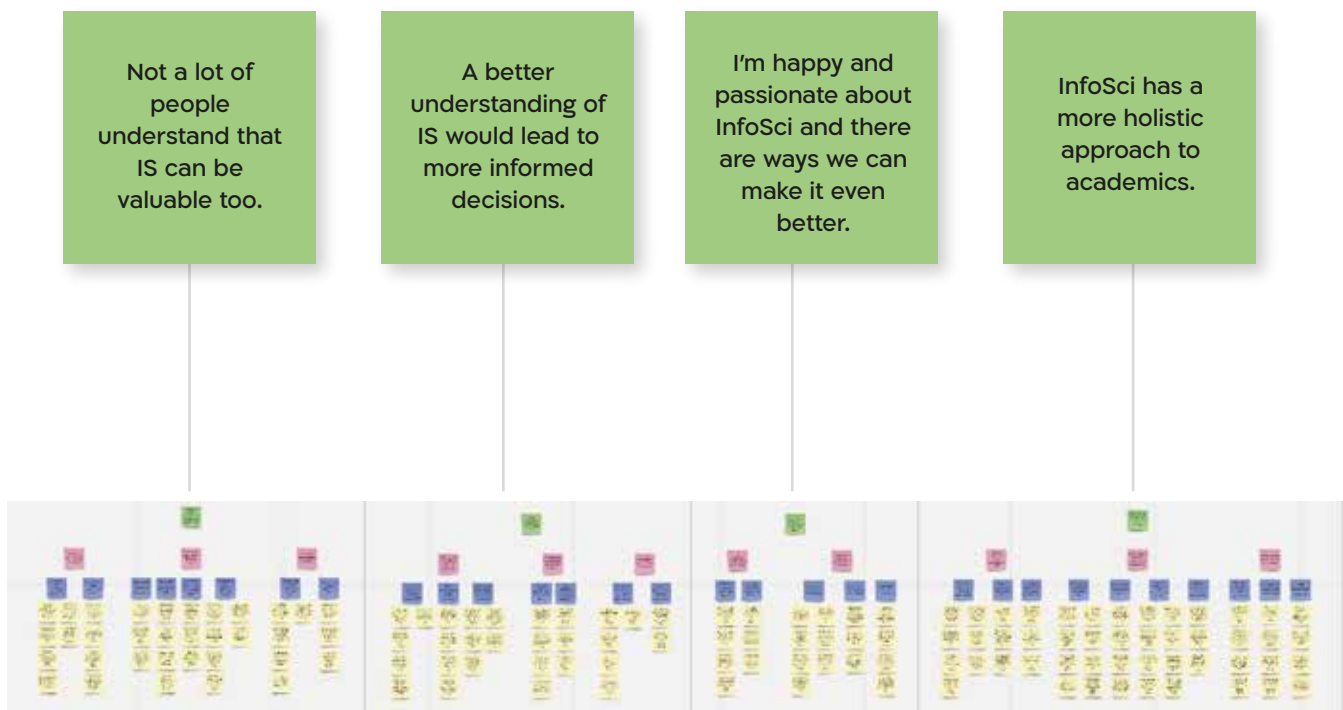
3 RELATIONSHIP MODEL

This model will help us better understand the students' world and how different parts within themselves and the outside world play a role in their decision-making.

AFFINITY DIAGRAM

This diagram organizes the data collected via contextual interviews into a four-tier hierarchy of themes and issues. Sentiments and beliefs were digitized and dissociated from individual participants so we might form a collective of voices, highlighting patterns and contrasting views so that we could address our dataset more holistically.

By breaking down our notes we attempted to move beyond preconceived categories and look at the bigger picture. This process was conducted from the bottom up, starting from raw data in specific groups, then grouping those groups to drive further sensemaking.

The results of the affinity diagram served as a primary source and guiding star for developing further models. Work was conducted virtually on Miro over two sessions, one to devise rough initial groupings based on broad themes, and the second to further that process towards solidified themes.

| Not a lot of people understand that IS can be valuable too. | A better understanding of IS would lead to more informed decisions. | I'm happy and passionate about InfoSci and there are ways we can make it even better. | InfoSci has a more holistic approach to academics. |

VIEW HIGH RES MODEL ON MIRO

Theme 1:

Not a lot of people understand that IS can be valuable too.

The lack of understanding of IS leads to social preconceptions.

CS & IS offer high value in different ways.

I feel that I am a pioneer for InfoSci.

People don't really understand what IS is.

I think that InfoSci consists of databases, cybersecurity, systems and management.

I feel like InfoSci is not fully established as a field.

There is a social hierarchy among the STEM degrees.

CS has a theoretical and math focus

It's hard to talk to people outside of IS about the major.

IS is on par with CS.

CS and IS are very different.

A better understanding of IS would lead to more informed decisions.

There is a lack of knowledge about IS both inside and outside of UMD.

Finding what I wanted was difficult, but worth it.

I stumbled upon InfoSci on my own.

I knew little about the program before UMD.

I had to go through the discovery phase to be sure of my decision

I had to rely on my own sources for information.

I don't know much about InfoSci

I was pleasantly surprised by what InfoSci taught me

I took an InfoSci class and then transferred

Knowing about InfoSci before I started could have changed my decision

Theme 3:

I'm happy and passionate about InfoSci and there are ways we can make it even better.

I feel passionate and confident about InfoSci.

I would like to see some changes in the curriculum.

I believe I am in the right place for me

I want more structure within InfoSci.

I don't care what other students think about IS.

I want more concentrations within InfoSci.

I want fewer online classes.

InfoSci has a more holistic approach to academics.

I was too stressed before switching into InfoSci.

InfoSci doesn't force you to focus on any singular thing.

InfoSci values interpersonal relationships.

CS classes are more stressful than InfoSci.

Coding is less central to IS than other majors.

My class settings feel intimate.

Many CS majors seem to transfer into IS.

IS can open more doors than CS.

I am part of a balanced community

IS students transfer from many other backgrounds.

I have the freedom to explore when I am part of InfoSci

I can depend on my peers.

My post grad plan is to work in the industry.

IDENTITY MODEL

Our first experience model was the identity model, allowing us to step into the shoes of archetypal students that might exist in and around the iSchool. These identities were crafted based on high level sentiments derived from the affinity diagram, and we attempted to include every major theme through one identity or another. These identities were divided amongst three sections: "I want" (what are they looking for?), "I am" (what makes them who they are?) and "I like" (what do they appreciate or enjoy?).

In addition to a description for each identity, we included a "Give me" section to inform us of what steps could be taken to improve the InfoSci experience for that type of student. To ensure that each identity is well-supported by our data, we also included a quote to ground those identities with context from the affinity diagram.

By utilizing this model we hope to gain a better understanding of who we are designing for and what needs/oppurtunities must be met within the iSchool.
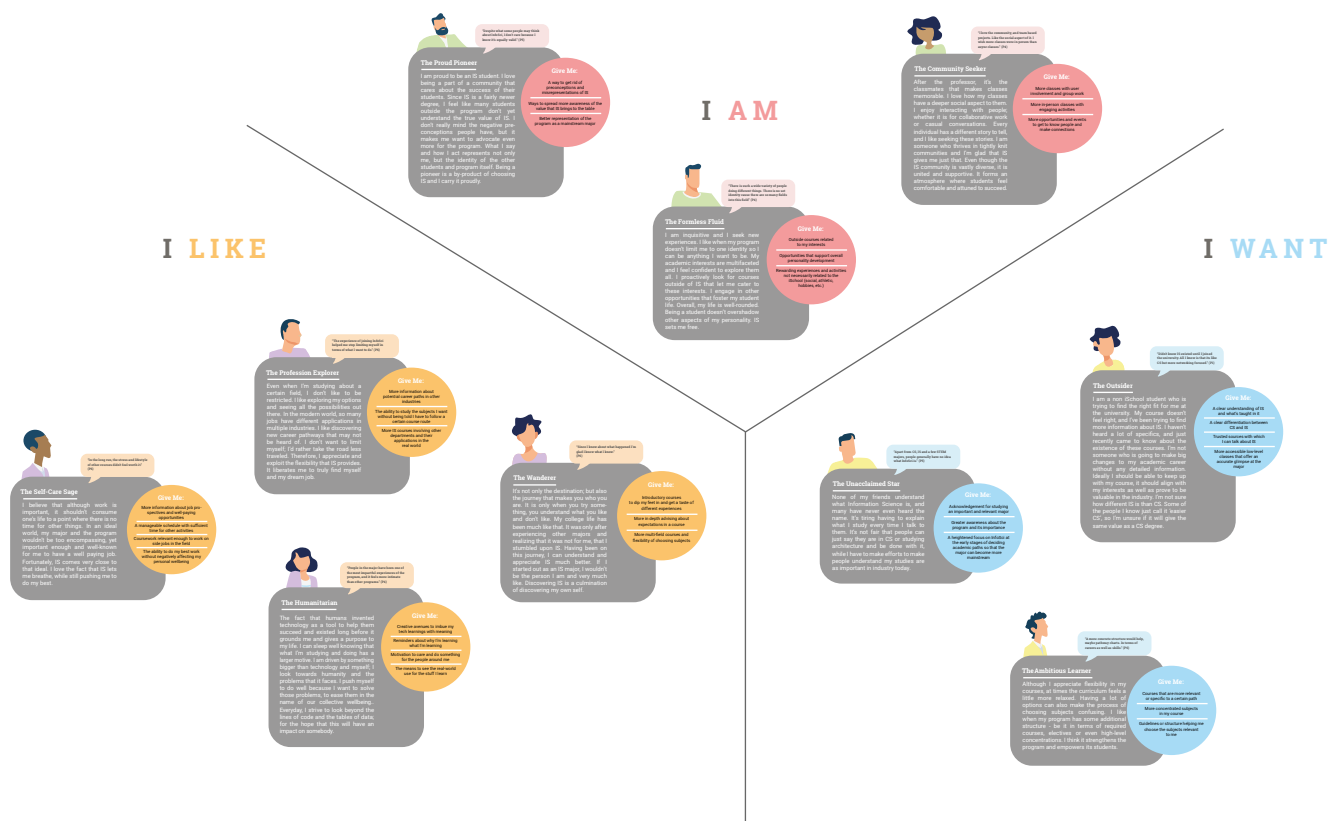
VIEW HIGH RES MODEL ON MIRO

I AM

"Despite what some people may think about InfoSci, I don't care because I know it's equally valid." (P5)

The Proud Pioneer

I am proud to be an IS student. I love being a part of a community that cares about the success of their students. Since IS is a fairly newer degree, I feel like many students outside the program don't yet understand the true value of IS. I don't really mind the negative pre-conceptions people have, but it makes me want to advocate even more for the program. What I say and how I act represents not only me, but the identity of the other students and program itself. Being a pioneer is a by-product of choosing IS and I carry it proudly.

Give Me:

A way to get rid of preconceptions and misrepresentations of IS

Ways to spread more awareness of the value that IS brings to the table

Better representation of the program as a mainstream major

"I love the community, and team based projects. Like the social aspect of it. I wish more classes were in person than async classes." (P4)

The Community Seeker

After the professor, it's the classmates that makes classes memorable. I love how my classes have a deeper social aspect to them. I enjoy interacting with people; whether it is for collaborative work or casual conversations. Every individual has a different story to tell, and I like seeking these stories. I am someone who thrives in tightly knit communities and I'm glad that IS gives me just that. Even though the IS community is vastly diverse, it is united and supportive. It forms an atmosphere where students feel comfortable and attuned to succeed.

Give Me:

More classes with user involvement and group work

More in-person classes with engaging activities

More opportunities and events to get to know people and make connections

"There is such a wide variety of people doing different things. There is no set identity cause there are so many fields into this field" (P4)

The Formless Fluid

I am inquisitive and I seek new experiences. I like when my program doesn't limit me to one identity so I can be anything I want to be. My academic interests are multifaceted and I feel confident to explore them all. I proactively look for courses outside of IS that let me cater to these interests. I engage in other opportunities that foster my student life. Overall, my life is well-rounded. Being a student doesn't overshadow other aspects of my personality. IS sets me free.

Give Me:

Outside courses related to my interests

Opportunities that support overall personality development

Rewarding experiences and activities not necessarily related to the iSchool (social, athletic, hobbies, etc.)

I LIKE

The Humanitarian

The fact that humans invented technology as a tool to help them succeed and existed long before it grounds me and gives a purpose to my life. I can sleep well knowing that what I'm studying and doing has a larger motive. I am driven by something bigger than technology and myself; I look towards humanity and the problems that it faces. I push myself to do well because I want to solve those problems, to ease them in the name of our collective wellbeing.. Everyday, I strive to look beyond the lines of code and the tables of data; for the hope that this will have an impact on somebody.

Give Me:

Creative avenues to imbue my tech learnings with meaning

Reminders about why I'm learning what I'm learning

Motivation to care and do something for the people around me

The means to see the real-world use for the stuff I learn

The Self-Care Sage

"In the long run, the stress and lifestyle of other courses didn't feel worth it." (P6)

I believe that although work is important, it shouldn't consume one's life to a point where there is no time for other things. In an ideal world, my major and the program wouldn't be too encompassing, yet important enough and well-known for me to have a well paying job. Fortunately, IS comes very close to that ideal. I love the fact that IS lets me breathe, while still pushing me to do my best.

Give Me:

More information about job pro-spectives and well-paying opportunities

A manageable schedule with sufficient time for other activities

Coursework relevant enough to work on side jobs in the field

The ability to do my best work without negatively affecting my personal wellbeing

The Profession Explorer

"The experience of joining InfoSci helped me stop limiting myself in terms of what I want to do." (P6)

Even when I'm studying about a certain field, I don't like to be restricted. I like exploring my options and seeing all the possibilities out there. In the modern world, so many jobs have different applications in multiple industries. I like discovering new career pathways that may not be heard of. I don't want to limit myself; I'd rather take the road less traveled. Therefore, I appreciate and exploit the flexibility that IS provides. It liberates me to truly find myself and my dream job.

Give Me:

More information about potential career paths in other industries

The ability to study the subjects I want without being told I have to follow a certain course route

More IS courses involving other departments and their applications in the real world

The Wanderer

"Since I know about what happened I'm glad I know what I know." (P6)

It's not only the destination; but also the journey that makes you who you are. It is only when you try some-thing, you understand what you like and don't like. My college life has been much like that. It was only after experiencing other majors and realizing that it was not for me, that I stumbled upon IS. Having been on this journey, I can understand and appreciate IS much better. If I started out as an IS major, I wouldn't be the person I am and very much like. Discovering IS is a culmination of discovering my own self.

Give Me:

Introductory courses to dip my feet in and get a taste of different experiences

More in depth advising about expectations in a course

More multi-field courses and flexibility of choosing subjects

VIEW HIGH RES MODEL ON MIRO

I WANT

The Outsider

"Didn't know IS existed until I joined the university. All I know is that its like CS but more networking focused." (P1)

I am a non iSchool student who is trying to find the right fit for me at the university. My course doesn't feel right, and I've been trying to find more information about IS. I haven't heard a lot of specifics, and just recently came to know about the existence of these courses. I'm not someone who is going to make big changes to my academic career without any detailed information. Ideally I should be able to keep up with my course, it should align with my interests as well as prove to be valuable in the industry. I'm not sure how different IS is than CS. Some of the people I know just call it 'easier CS', so I'm unsure if it will give the same value as a CS degree.

Give Me:

A clear understanding of IS and what's taught in it

A clear differentiation between CS and IS

Trusted sources with which I can talk about IS

More accessible low-level classes that offer an accurate glimpse at the major

The Unacclaimed Star

"Apart from CS, IS and a few STEM majors, people generally have no idea what InfoSci is." (P5)

None of my friends understand what Information Science is, and many have never even heard the name. It's tiring having to explain what I study every time I talk to them. It's not fair that people can just say they are in CS or studying architecture and be done with it, while I have to make efforts to make people understand my studies are as important in industry today.

Give Me:

Acknowledgement for studying an important and relevant major

Greater awareness about the program and its importance

A heightened focus on InfoSci at the early stages of deciding academic paths so that the major can become more mainstream

The Ambitious Learner

"A more concrete structure would help, maybe pathway charts. In terms of careers as well as skills." (P6)

Although I appreciate flexibility in my courses, at times the curriculum feels a little more relaxed. Having a lot of options can also make the process of choosing subjects confusing. I like when my program has some additional structure - be it in terms of required courses, electives or even high-level concentrations. I think it strengthens the program and empowers its students.

Give Me:

Courses that are more relevant or specific to a certain path

More concentrated subjects in my course

Guidelines or structure helping me choose the subjects relevant to me
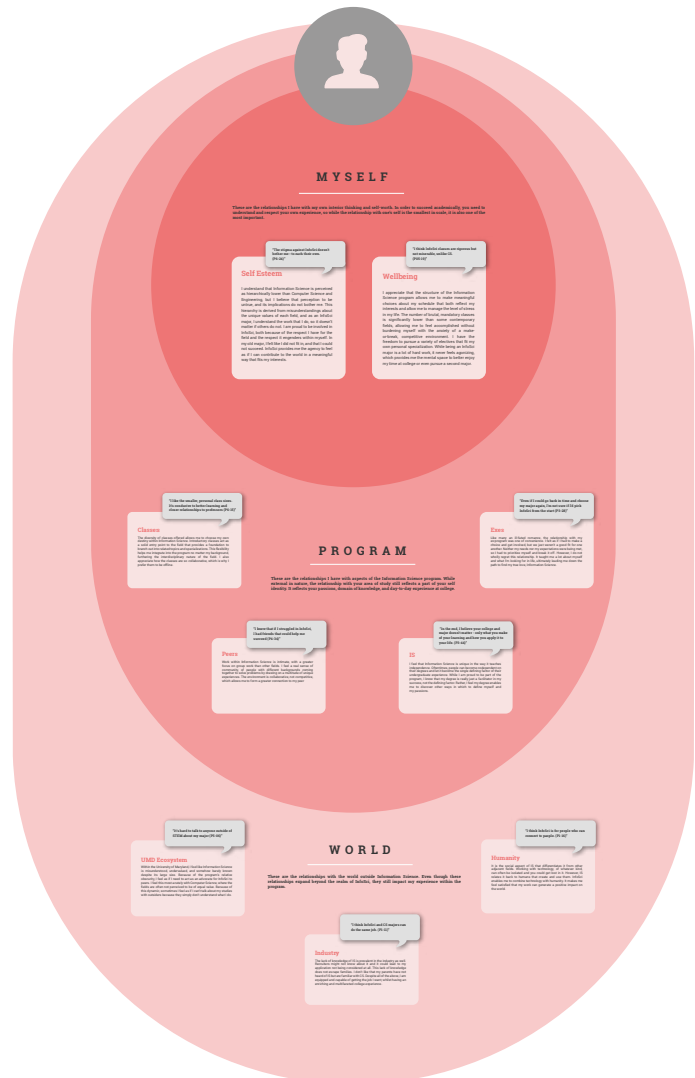
VIEW HIGH RES MODEL ON MIRO

RELATIONSHIP MODEL

Our second experience model was the relationship model, outlining key internal and external relationships with various aspects of their program and beyond. Unlike a traditional relationship model, which links the participants to individuals or types of individuals within their life, our model charts connections between the user and various abstract entities within their life and examines how that relationship reflects InfoSci identity.

For our dataset, interviewees talked less about their connect-ions to individuals and more about their connections to concepts, so we believe this pivot from the standard model better reflects the experience of iSchool students.

Relationships were divided into three groups with increasing levels of scope and decreasing levels of interiority, starting with "Myself," then "My Program" and finally "The World".

Like the first model, we utilized participant quotes to ground our conclusions with primary data. We hoped that by concept-ualizing "relationships" in this way, we might gain insight into the decision-making process of InfoSci students.

MYSELF

These are the relationships I have with my own interior thinking and self-worth. In order to succeed academically, you need to understand and respect your own experience, so while the relationship with one's self is the smallest in scale, it is also one of the most important.

"The stigma against InfoSci doesn't bother me--to each their own. (P6-24)"

"I think InfoSci classes are rigorous but not miserable, unlike CS. (P05-19)"

Self Esteem

I understand that Information Science is perceived as hierarchically lower than Computer Science and Engineering, but I believe that perception to be untrue, and its implications do not bother me. This hierarchy is derived from misunderstandings about the unique values of each field, and as an InfoSci major, I understand the work that I do, so it doesn't matter if others do not. I am proud to be involved in InfoSci, both because of the respect I have for the field and the respect it engenders within myself. In my old major, I felt like I did not fit in, and that I could not succeed. InfoSci provides me the agency to feel as if I can contribute to the world in a meaningful way that fits my interests.

Wellbeing

I appreciate that the structure of the Information Science program allows me to make meaningful choices about my schedule that both reflect my interests and allow me to manage the level of stress in my life. The number of brutal, mandatory classes is significantly lower than some contemporary fields, allowing me to feel accomplished without burdening myself with the anxiety of a make-or-break, competitive environment. I have the freedom to pursue a variety of electives that fit my own personal specialization. While being an InfoSci major is a lot of hard work, it never feels agonizing, which provides me the mental space to better enjoy my time at college or even pursue a second major.

PROGRAM

These are the relationships I have with aspects of the Information Science program. While external in nature, the relationship with your area of study still reflects a part of your self identity. It reflects your passions, domain of knowledge, and day-to-day experience at college.

> "I like the smaller, personal class sizes. It's conducive to better learning and closer relationships to professors (P6-15)"

Classes

The diversity of classes offered allows me to choose my own destiny within Information Science. Introductory classes act as a solid entry point to the field that provides a foundation to branch out into related topics and specializations. This flexibility helps me integrate into the program no matter my background, furthering the interdisciplinary nature of the field. I also appreciate how the classes are so collaborative, which is why I prefer them to be offline.

> "Even if I could go back in time and choose my major again, I'm not sure if I'd pick InfoSci from the start (P3-28)"

Exes

Like many an ill-fated romance, the relationship with my ex-program was one of convenience. I felt as if I had to make a choice and get involved, but we just weren't a good fit for one another. Neither my needs nor my expectations were being met, so I had to prioritize myself and break it off. However, I do not wholly regret this relationship. It taught me a lot about myself and what I'm looking for in life, ultimately leading me down the path to find my true love, Information Science.

> "I knew that if I struggled in InfoSci, I had friends that could help me succeed (P4-34)"

Peers

Work within Information Science is intimate, with a greater focus on group work than other fields. I feel a real sense of community, of people with different backgrounds coming together to solve problems by drawing on a multitude of unique experiences. The environment is collaborative, not competitive, which allows me to form a greater connection to my peer

> "In the end, I believe your college and major doesn't matter - only what you make of your learning and how you apply it to your life. (P3-44)"

IS

I feel that Information Science is unique in the way it teaches independence. Oftentimes, people can become codependent on their degrees and let it become the single defining factor of their undergraduate experience. While I am proud to be part of the program, I know that my degree is really just a facilitator in my success, not the defining factor. Rather, I feel my degree enables me to discover other ways in which to define myself and my passions.

WORLD

These are the relationships with the world outside Information Science. Even though these relationships expand beyond the realm of InfoSci, they still impact my experience within the program.

> "It's hard to talk to anyone outside of STEM about my major (P5-06)"

UMD Ecosystem

Within the University of Maryland, I feel like Information Science is misunderstood, undervalued, and somehow barely known despite its large size. Because of the program's relative obscurity, I feel as if I need to act as an advocate for InfoSci to peers. I feel this most acutely with Computer Science, where the fields are often not perceived to be of equal value. Because of this dynamic, sometimes I feel as if I can't talk about my studies with outsiders because they simply don't understand what I do.

> "I think InfoSci and CS majors can do the same job. (P1-11)"

Industry

The lack of knowledge of IS is prevalent in the industry as well. Recruiters might not know about it and it could lead to my application not being considered at all. This lack of knowledge does not escape families. I don't like that my parents have not heard of IS but are familiar with CS. Despite all of the above, I am equipped and capable of getting the job I want; whilst having an enriching and multifaceted college experience.

> "I think InfoSci is for people who can connect to paople. (P1-16)"

Humanity

It is the social aspect of IS that differentiates it from other adjacent fields. Working with technology, of whatever kind, can often be isolated and you could get lost in it. However, IS relates it back to humans that create and use them. InfoSci enables me to combine technology with humanity. It makes me feel satisfied that my work can generate a positive impact on the world.