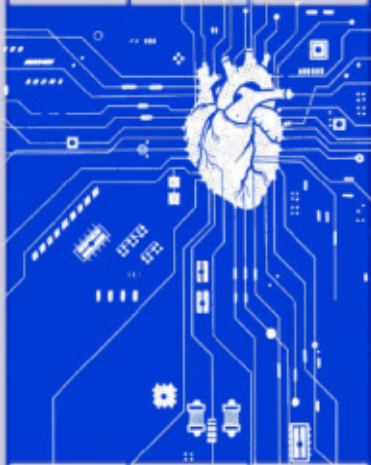
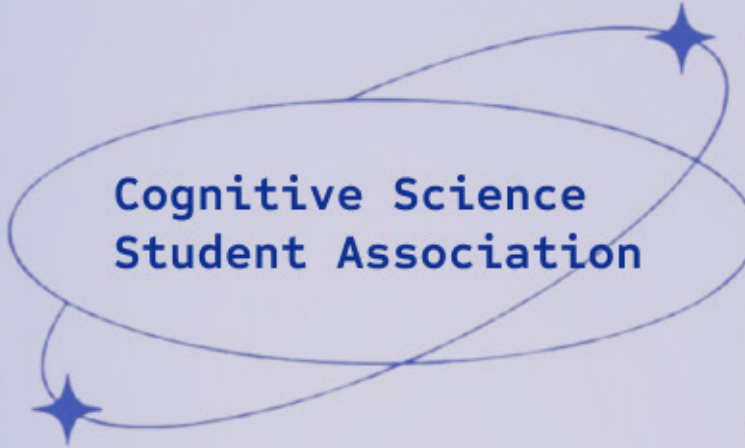




CSSA builds community around Cognitive Science by hosting academic and social events, supporting students, and organizing the California cognitive science conference annually.



# Neural



# Dispatch

— □ ×

STORIES

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1. “Student Spotlight” - text and design by Sokha Som

2. “Club Spotlight” - text and design by Claire Zhao





# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## Melissa Co

Without fail, second-year Cognitive Science major Melissa Co (she/her) approaches every situation with passion, curiosity, and an open mind. In our first Student Spotlight, Melissa shares what inspired her to pursue Cognitive Science, what she loves most about life at Berkeley, and offers advice for new Cal students.

### Q&A

Why did you choose Cognitive Science as your major?

“My reason for majoring in Cognitive Science is how broad the major can be while still focusing on one thing: the human mind! I didn’t really know which major I wanted to do... However, I [learned] about Cognitive Science and how you can go into any career field. I absolutely loved it! I love learning about [the] brain and mind.”

Tell me about your experience as a Berkeley student.

The biggest thing I’ve learned being at Berkeley is to try out new things and put yourself out there! You’re in such an incredible place with so many organizations and resources for you to pick up or hone. Don’t stop yourself from reaching out to a peer, professor, or anything else out of fear of judgment, just be yourself!”

Do you have any current projects?

“In my Design Methodology class, we connect engineering, business, design, and understanding of the human mind and psychology [into] a semester-long project [about] solving the issue of AR-based shopping.”

Do you have any current post-graduations plans?

“I’m interested in either going to graduate school or working straight out of college! I’m also hoping to work somewhere in the business/tech field, such as marketing or product.”

What motivates you?

“[M]y family and loved ones! I always remind myself to keep pushing when I’m in a rough patch in life, that I have so many people cheering me on, and it snaps me into reality that I need to keep doing my best to make them proud.”

What’s your favorite Cognitive Science discipline?

“My favorite discipline out of the six has to be Psychology right now! I took a Child Development course a few years ago, and ever since then, I’ve always wanted to know more about how your childhood and background shape you as a person growing up.”



**“The biggest thing I’ve learned being at Berkeley is to try out new things and put yourself out there!”**

Song Recommendation



Cool  
Daniel Caesar



Starting the Fall 2025 semester off with a series of interactive and enticing social workshops, the Cognitive Science Students Association (CSSA) hosted its first general meetings of the year on September 23, October 8, and October 22. Open to UC Berkeley students of all majors and experience levels, these meetings offered students a chance to connect through creativity and cognitive curiosity.

# CLUB SPOTLIGHT:

## Cognitive Science Students Association

Sept. 23

At the first meeting, nearly 30 members put their public speaking skills to the test in a low-stakes “Toastmasters Roulette” workshop. Officers spun a wheel of fortune, randomly assigning volunteers to give minute-long lightning talks on actual “hot takes” held by various internal members in their interviews to join the club this semester. Some fun viewpoints included “Raccoons are the best pet,” “Ice is the best snack,” and “TV shows are better than movies.” After their presentations, volunteers were asked to “popcorn” to a new participant, choosing another member in the room to speak on another topic. The lively activity invited convincing arguments and contesting viewpoints, pushing the boundaries of participants’ professional speaking abilities. CSSA member and junior Kat Shabarshina, a nominated speaker, had a pleasant surprise when she was asked to speak on the spot.

66

My favorite thing [about this event] was testing myself. I was worried going into it, but as I was up there, I realized that I could come up with good things and form an argument that seemed to work well.

*Kat Shabarshina* 99

66

I liked seeing the diversity of our alumni and the many different perspectives and career pathways of Cognitive Science. I’ll keep their advice in mind when I’m choosing my classes in the spring.

*Jeddy Xu* 99

Oct. 8

Following the success of this icebreaker event, CSSA shifted gears towards professional development at its second general meeting. CSSA partnered with nSpire AI, an artificial intelligence startup focused on resume and career optimization, to host a professional development workshop. The event brought around 20 attendees to learn how to present their skills effectively and leverage nSpire’s AI bot, Theo, in their job application process and resume optimization. CSSA officer and senior Namrata Paudel appreciated that the speakers encouraged young women to pursue careers in STEM.

66

I liked that the speakers were invested in getting to know us students and providing us with advice.

*Namrata Paudel* 99

Oct. 22

Finally, CSSA’s third general meeting featured a virtual panel with four Cognitive Science alumni from UC Berkeley — Myra Tahir ’25, Andrew Shibata ’17, Gabriel Freeman ’16, and Jenna Mattinson ’21 — two of whom, Myra and Gabriel, previously served on CSSA’s executive team. Roughly 30 students sat in an auditorium as panelists answered questions and offered advice about their lives after graduating with Cognitive Science degrees from UC Berkeley. As someone interested in a similar pathway, panel attendee and junior Jeddy Xu especially resonated with Gabriel’s focus on UX research and design.



# OUTER LIMITS *of the mind*

General members aren't the only ones mingling in CSSA — since the beginning of the semester, CSSA's internal committee members have also been hard at work, planning the 17th annual California Cognitive Science Conference (CCSC). After each general meeting, the club's internal committees (including Technology, Finance, Outreach, Social Media, Professional Development, Media, Design, and the executives) meet weekly to brainstorm their respective components of the conference. Their planning will culminate in a series of keynote speakers, research presentations, and networking opportunities for students and professionals across the Cognitive Science community in April 2026.

This year's conference theme is "Outer Limits of the Mind," exploring the ways in which the boundaries and frontiers of cognition can be pushed beyond what was previously thought possible. Bringing their experience from

previous themes like "The Mind Mosaic" from 2025 or "Pathways to Purpose" from 2024, many returning internal members are back this year to contribute their skills and ideas to the new conference theme. One of them is CSSA Co-President and senior Shrobana Sengupta, now in her fourth year in the club and third year planning the conference.

*Follow on Instagram!*



@cogscicon

@cssa.berkeley

*expand  
create  
inspire  
adapt  
explore*

66

It's been super cool to actually lead this process, and what I'm really excited about is being able to have fun with the theme. One of the things I'm passionate about is criminology and looking at how mental illness affects criminals' actions. It's interesting to bring in that psychological aspect and see how their sense of identity changes.

*Shrobana Sengupta* 99

## Future plans

Outside of conference work, CSSA plans to continue holding general meetings every other week to acquaint both members and non-members of the club alike with Cognitive Science topics and explorations. For more information and upcoming events like these, check out and follow @cssa.berkeley and @cogscicon on Instagram to stay updated on the club's activities and the 2026 conference.