*Use these suggestions as guidelines for preparing a stronger application for the OMSCS program. Following them****does NOT guarantee****that you will be accepted. Focus on documenting and substantiating your computer science knowledge and on explaining why you are capable of rigorous, graduate-level computer science coursework. These suggestions are presented in no particular order.*

Do**:**

* **NOT**Describe your motivations or experiences prior to college
* **NOT**List your coursework – it is on your transcript (UNLESS you need to describe how a course encompassed CS concepts)
* **NOT**Ask work peers, spouses, in-laws, siblings, parents, children, religious leaders, friends, etc. to write reference letters
* **NOT**Describe or list hobbies, personal interests, or other areas of your life irrelevant to Computer Science
* **NOT**List non-graded, non-academic-credit MOOC-type coursework
* **NOT** List any background prior to your undergraduate work (e.g., secondary or high school) - it **IS IRRELEVANT to Graduate School!**

**You:**

* **SHOULD**Include a transcript from EVERY college/university you have ever attended for academic credit!  If you don't, processing your application will be delayed!
* **SHOULD**START your Background statement with your academic degrees!
* **SHOULD**Summarize in your Background statement your work experience as it APPLIES to your Computer Science capabilities
* **SHOULD**Explain a poor undergraduate GPA and why you would do better in rigorous graduate classes
* **SHOULD**Explain succinctly in your Purpose statement how the OMSCS degree will benefit YOU
* **SHOULD**Ask professors and/or work supervisors who have DIRECT, SPECIFIC knowledge of your Computer Science capabilities to write reference letters – **AND** ask them to comment SPECIFICALLY on your CS knowledge
* **SHOULD**INCLUDE a resume – processing your application will be delayed if you do not submit a resume.

**Guidelines on what makes a strong Background statement and Statement of Purpose, plus suggestions on what to ask the writers of your Recommendation Letters to do.**

***Following these suggestions and guidelines does NOT guarantee admission into the OMSCS program!***

Here is an example of a succinct yet complete Background statement (it happens to be a EE major, but this example can be applied to any background):

*I graduated with a 3.75/4.0 GPA from XYZ with a BS in EE. While attending XYZ, I worked in the business intelligence office writing SQL reports to provide projections for the financial aid office. While at XYZ I was a member of the TUV lab where I was a student mentor for various projects and a soldering instructor. For my senior capstone project, I was the hardware design lead. As a student I interned at ABC for a summer working with the hardware department. As a student I attended numerous hackathons across the country and my team became one of the top teams in the country. After graduation, I worked full time as an EE for ABC in the hardware department. I designed custom PCB's and wrote embedded software. I worked there for 3 years, but before I left ABC for another company, I was the DSP lead for a project as well as the embedded software lead for another project. I now work for a company named QRT as a software engineering manager.*

* **Keep it short!**
* **Lead off with your academic credentials** – you are applying to an academic position – not a new job!
* **We don’t want your life story**– start with your undergraduate experience.
* List student experiences related (or closely related) to Computer Science.
* List CS-relevant coop/internship experiences.
* Summarize CS-relevant work experiences and projects.

What to put in your Statement of Purpose:

* It does NOT need to be long or ramble!  Just write up **short answers** to the following questions!
* Why are you interested in an MS in CS?
* What concentration or specialty are you interested in?  Why?
* What goal will having an MS in CS help you achieve?
* What specifically about Georgia Tech’s OMSCS program interests you?
* Try to limit your response to 250 words!

What you should ask the writers of your Recommendation Letters to address in their letters:

* Do **NOT** have work peers, spouses, in-laws, siblings, parents, children, religious leaders, friends, etc. write recommendation letters –those letters are ignored!
* Your personal characteristics (e.g., being punctual to work, “thirsting” for knowledge, great team player, leadership skills, etc.) are NOT important.  What is?  **Your technical skills as related to CS!**
* Since you are applying to an academic program, you should have at least one academic reference.
* For an academic letter writer, ask a professor/teacher who has had you in a CS-related class; if you have a non-CS or related background and took few or no CS classes, ask a professor who taught you in a challenging, technical course.  Regardless, ask them to comment specifically on your technical abilities – how did you meet the challenges of their course; how did you solve problems; what skills, knowledge, and tools did you bring to bear on the problem or project?
* For a work letter writer, it should be a supervisor who has DIRECT knowledge of your TECHNICAL CS-related skills.  A high-level executive who doesn’t understand the technical details of your work cannot write a good recommendation.  The letter writer should specifically comment on projects or tasks that you undertook:  what was the problem, what was the result, and how were your **CS skills** utilized to achieve the result.  Ask the letter writer to state their credentials as to how they relate to CS, i.e., why are they competent to comment on your CS skills?

I graduated with a 2.98/4.0 GPA from Drexel University with a BS in Computer Engineering. While attending Drexel, I worked ten different jobs/internships over the course of five years to pay for my education. Working 30-40 hours per week, taking a full course load, and remaining to struggle to pay for my education caused a lot of stress in maintaining a high GPA. Having now found a stable point in my life, I feel confident that I can fully commit to the OMSCS program. Working as a machine learning software developer for the Geometric Biomedical Computing Group, I developed a machine learning technique to differentiate breast cancer tissue samples as either benign or malignant with an 83% success rate as compared to the pathologist. I also worked as a Python TA for four quarters, teaching classes from basic OOP to data structures. During my last co-op, I worked as a quality assurance tester and developer, developing natural language processing software in Java and Python. For my capstone project, I was the lead hardware and software developer, developing a touch screen cooking interface and natural language processing voice assistant. I currently work for the Missile Defense Agency where I build and troubleshoot simulations using Bash, Perl, Python, and Java, . Feel free to check out my projects: <http://danbjohnson.com/projects.html>

Please give a Statement of Purpose detailing your academic and research goals as well as career plans. Include your reasons for choosing the College of Computing as opposed to other programs and/or other universities. Your space is limited to 4000 characters.