CMPSC 580
Topics and Research Methods in Computer Science
Spring 2015

Assignment 1
Assessing Your Interests
Due 15 January 2015

The goal of this assignment is to help you identify where your interests lie in the area of computer science and then to get you started thinking about how you can combine those interests into a senior project proposal that will be exciting and rewarding.

I want you to take a serious look at the past two and a half years, review your computer science experiences, and think about how you want to spend the next year and a half. Think about why you chose to major in computer science. What would you like to be able to say about your accomplishments at the end of four years? What do you imagine telling a potential employer about what you've learned and what you've done with that knowledge?

I have broken this assignment up into a written and an oral component.

1. Take the "Survey of Interests" (provided as a separate handout). Sit down with another member of the class and go through the questions together—interview each other. Help each other try to come up with thoughtful answers—perhaps you have shared a class together and you can remind each other of "aha!" moments experienced late at night in the labs, or of assignments or projects that gave you the greatest satisfaction.

   Then fill out your answers (if you do not want to hand-write them on the survey sheets, you may type them into a separate document using a text editor and a language like LaTeX or Markdown) and bring them to class on Thursday. Be prepared to share your experiences.

2. Prepare a short (two-minute) "lightning talk" for Thursday in which you briefly describe some aspect of computer science that interests you. Try to articulate why it interests you. Explain what more you would like to learn about this area and, if you can, try to imagine how you might be able to do this through the senior project you complete next year.

   Prepare one slide to show on the screen as you give your lightning talk. It needn't be complex or formatted in any particular way. However, it should include your name, the date, your topic, and something to help focus the viewer's attention on the topic you've chosen.