CSCE 399 ENGR[x] Reflection

*Reflection Instructions: Reflect on your high-impact learning activity below in paragraph form. Your responses must be thoughtful and total at least 600 words (not including words in the template/instructions). Do not include any information that your activity’s sponsor would consider confidential.*

**Briefly describe the activity. Include who sponsored the activity, where and when it took place, and its duration.**

My high-impact learning activity was the honors section of CSCE 120 that I took last semester (Fall 2023) with Dr. Moore. This activity was sponsored by the CSCE department here at Texas A&M University. It lasted for the entirety of the Fall 2023 semester.

**What was your role in the activity? How much of the activity was individual vs. collaborative?**

My role in the activity was mostly that of a student. However, the honors activities included in the class made it more like a community of students, since we had to peer review each other’s “honors artifacts,” which were assignments meant to further our understanding of the class material. Most of my work in the class was individual. After all, the homework was meant to be individual assignments, and that was the vast majority of our grade. However, the in class labs required collaboration between classmates, and discussing with each other helped us complete the lab quicker and more accurately.

**What specific things did you accomplish in the activity?**

In taking the honors section of CSCE 120, I completed weekly homework coding assignments, participated in lab activities during class, listened to lecture, took two midterms and a final exam, and completed three “honors artifacts.” The only difference between the honors and non honors sections were the honors artifacts, which consisted of video tutorials, and creating a mock lab activity.

**What lessons did you learn in the activity that you will take into your future? What training/skills did you acquire?**

Taking CSCE 120 honors taught me valuable programming skills in C++ that I can apply in future coding projects and classes. I think that teaching C++ was especially helpful to us students, since it introduces some very important concepts like pointers and low level ideas that are paramount to computer science as a field and future classes, especially CSCE 312. Beyond just the technical skills, I improved my problem solving abilities by working through the admittedly challenging coding assignments. The peer review aspect of the honors artifacts also gave me experience in analyzing code and providing constructive feedback, which are important collaboration skills. Overall, this class provided a strong coding foundation that I can build upon going forward.

**What effect do you believe the activity will have on your choices of future coursework, profession, and post-graduation plans?**

For me, taking CSCE 120 honors gave me a better idea at what an industry career might look like, and made me consider other options like graduate school and research. Regardless, I like building things with code, but sometimes it can be made tedious. I found that things like unit tests and documentation (which are a huge part of a software engineering career) are things that I find very not fun. However, I do understand that the point of the class is to introduce us to the rigor that is necessary in programming.

**What coursework in your major’s curriculum most prepared you for the activity? Why?**

There is no coursework specific to my major that prepared me for this class as it is a very basic course that is prerequisite for almost all of the courses in my degree plan. However, ENGR 102 in general engineering was relatively similar and helped prime me for the basics that I would need to know before taking CSCE 120. However, I would say that conversely, CSCE 120 prepared me well for my following courses, such as CSCE 221, 312, and 314.

**What topics do you wish had been covered in your coursework before the activity? Why?**

Honestly I do not think there needs to be anything specific or additional that needs to be required before taking CSCE 120 honors or even just CSCE 120 in general. I think it is good that this class is expository and accessible to everyone at TAMU, and that very nature helps people discover what they like or dislike about coding and computer science in general. Although CSCE 120 does go much deeper than a course like ENGR 102 which is required by all engineering degrees, it still has the spirit of being an introductory course that anyone can take and can learn from.

**Would you recommend other students do this activity? Why or why not?**

I am not sure if I would recommend this to other students. To be completely honest, doing the three honors artifacts did not help me much better understand the coursework, though this might not be the case for other students. To me, taking CSCE 120 honors felt like more motivated by the honors credit requirement (and later discovering it would count as high impact experience) than its merits as better understanding the material.

**If another student wanted to do this type of activity, how should they go about finding the opportunity?**

Taking the honors section of CSCE 120 is quite straightforward; as long as you are eligible for honors classes (in honors or above some gpa requirement). It is as simple as finding the honors section in class registration, and it usually doesn’t fill up too quickly (for me it was the last section available).

**(Optional) Any additional comments?**

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