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Only the really smart kids pursue programming. That was my belief as an 11th grader taking AP Computer Science. I enjoyed programming. I mean, I really enjoyed programming. I loved the logical puzzles it posed and the procedural approach to solving those puzzles. I delighted in the challenge it provided and the unique way it required me to think. But still, despite my utter delight in taking this class, I believed that CS was for the ‘nerds’ of the school, not the jocks like me. So, I put programming in the bucket of a fun elective, not a potential career path.

Almost two decades and four children later, I found myself planning my re-entry into the workforce. I attended Wharton for undergrad seeking to feed my entrepreneurial bent. After graduation I worked a few unfulfilling years in HR years before leaving corporate America to raise young children. I’ve dabbled in consulting since then to keep my mind active and productively channel my insatiable desire to problem-solve. Dabbling was fine for a while, but the time came to pursue a career.

Not eager to return to HR and update my technical skills for the current job market, I began to ponder my old interest – programming. I recalled how much fun AP CS was. I thought back to OPIM 311 at Penn – one of the hardest classes I took, but I loved it and earned one of my best grades (A-). I began to test a theory that programming might be a potential career path - first through Khan Academy’s Computer Science Curriculum and then with [Flatiron School](https://flatironschool.com/)’s coding boot camp. After concluding my hypothesis was correct I enrolled in Flatiron’s Full Stack Web Development Program, completed it in under eight months, and walked away with a workable skill set that includes Ruby, Rails, ES6, React and Redux.

From day one of my new coding venture I was completely hooked and had no doubt that Software Development was the direction I would take for my second career. I found an avenue to express creativity while also exercising the logical and problem-solving side of my brain - and I did just that with my capstone project for Flatiron. As long as I used a Rails backend with a React/Redux frontend I could architect my final project in any way I chose. And so, my graduating project was a fully functional web app that takes a twist on Bingo to make learning Spanish fun and easy for children.

Flatiron has given me a tremendous start in this career trajectory, but I’m looking to go both deeper and wider. The Master of Computer and Information Technology program can provide the CS foundation I lack and is a logical next step for my path in tech. I desire to develop a solid understanding of data structures and algorithms, dive deeper into programming and round out the curriculum with electives in data science.

The approach of a Computer Science program for those without Computer Science backgrounds gives me great confidence that I can thrive. I know Penn is looking for students with high quantitative aptitudes. My transcript from 15 years ago likely does not give you great confidence in me. During my 4 years at Penn, I endured significantly difficult personal and family experiences that impacted every area of my life – including my academics. My track record since then, including my completion of a [Smart.ly MBA](https://smart.ly/) and Flatiron School within the last two years, is evidence of my high achieving ability. Additionally, before the end of 2018, I will have also finished [Seth Godin’s altMBA](https://altmba.com/). I possess no lack of motivation, my time management skills are exceptional, and there is nothing that will stop me from continuing to grow and learn in this field. My hope is that I can do so through Penn’s MCIT program.

But academics are only one draw for the program; there is also the community. MCIT students come from varied backgrounds, each bringing a unique perspective on work and life and how tech can impact both. I am eager to bring my own background to that mix and exchange ideas on how to use technology to advance human flourishing while also hopefully building relationships that will continue long into my career.

I was surprised by the community I found at Flatiron because it was a purely online program, but by the time I finished, I had made solid friendships that were forged through shared experience. We helped each other grasp hard concepts, encouraged each other when things got tough, and cheered each other on as we searched for jobs post-graduation. My undergraduate time at Penn taught me that an education is more than just the information you acquire, but also about the people you meet while learning. I am eager to develop similar relationships within the MCIT community as I work (virtually) side by side with classmates.

Feeding my entrepreneurial bent, I currently work for an EdTech startup called [Prompt](http://prompt.com/). In typical start-up fashion, job roles span across multiple categories. It’s a thrilling mix of operations, customer service and tech. The MCIT program can provide the robust understanding of software architecture, design patterns and computer systems in general that will enable me to make significant and valuable technical contributions to our team as our company grows.

It has only taken me 15 years to realize the type of work that excites my passions and my intellect. As an eighteen-year-old kid I was expected to make big decisions that would impact my future. While my favorite classes were always in business *and* computer science, I never once considered CS as an option. My Wharton degree has served me well and I’m proud to be a Penn alumna; I am now looking to add the Computer Science degree I was too insecure to pursue in my younger years. I’d be delighted and honored to return to my alma mater and be part of the inaugural class for the online Master of Computer and Information Technology program.