

Name and Address of Chapter:

University of Virginia ACM-W Student Chapter
1111 Preston Avenue, apt 11B
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Names and email addresses of chapter officers:

Chair: Sofia Shalotenko, svs3jm@virginia.edu
Vice Chair: Divya Bhaskara, dsb5fv@virginia.edu
Faculty Sponsor: May Lou Soffa, soffa@virginia.edu

Brief description of chapter and school including number of members:

The ACM-W chapter at the University of Virginia is also known as WiCS (Women in Computing Sciences) at UVA. We seek to create a network for all the women in computing majors and computing-related majors at the university. We also include members in non-affiliated majors who are interested in learning more about computing. WiCS provides professional, social, educational, mentorship, and outreach opportunities for our members. As of April 18, 2016, the chapter has 127 members.

The University of Virginia is a public research university in Charlottesville, Virginia. UVA is commonly known for its historic significance and honor code.

Number of students at your school who take CS and related courses and typical majors of chapter members:

The computer science department has not gathered data on the number of students at UVA who take CS and related courses, however there were 952 students enrolled in introductory computing courses in Spring 2016.

Our membership consists primarily of computer science and computer engineering majors.

URL for chapter home page:

<http://wics.cs.virginia.edu>

Outstanding Community Service:

This past year, WiCS at UVA has started a high school outreach program at Charlottesville High School (CHS). A team of 4 dedicated WiCS members have been going to CHS twice a month for the past year to teach a group of about 10 high school girls basic coding skills. Our work with CHS is the start of a larger program to reach out to neighboring schools in order to introduce girls to computing who might not otherwise be exposed to it. The inspiration for the program came from the fact that a large number of WiCS members had only learned about computing as an option once they got to college and many of these women wish they had the opportunity to start exploring their computing-related interests earlier. Our outreach team seeks to provide that opportunity, or at least spark an interest and appreciation for computing, among high school girls.

Fall semester was dedicated to basic coding principles—objects, variables, methods, etc. Spring semester was dedicated to skills that can help someone build a website—html, deploying a website, using templates, etc.

We recently started a blog (<https://wicsatchs.wordpress.com/>) to document our visits and provide a reference for the girls who want to explore a topic further or may have missed a meeting. The structure of our visits was determined through a joint effort between our mentorship chair and a vice principal from CHS. It was decided to have a smaller program such that each of the high school girls can receive one-on-one attention (rather than having WiCS host a series of lectures). This allowed the program to be more accessible to girls who had not coded before. With the help of some funding from the UVA Computer Science department, WiCS has also been able to provide snacks for these bi-monthly meetings.

The success of the high school outreach program can be attributed to the individual efforts and passion of the 4 members of the outreach team. They consistently go above and beyond their call of duty to engage the girls, create lesson plans, and share their excitement for computing. The mentorship chair also put in a lot of managerial effort in order to start the program, keep it running all year, and encourage interest in high school outreach among WiCS members such that it could be continued and expanded. Special thanks goes out to the CHS faculty and staff for being welcoming and encouraging their students to sign up for the program.