

I would say my career in Computer Science started rather late in my short-but-not-too-short life span. I had joined Coding Club my sophomore and junior year in high school, but all we did was to go on Codacademy.com and learn html or java on our own. Nor was the initial spark my pure interest in coding, but my parent's comment that everyone - including children in elementary school - is learning how to code.

I wouldn't say my first impression of coding was bad, though. It was nothing like actual coding, but it was fun because of how Codacademy made it very user-friendly. Therefore, I do not complain that the only thing that Coding Club taught me was the website called Codacademy.

Actually, let me go back another year, when I was in Precalculus, when Mrs. Shuman made us program games on our graphing calculator. That is when I truly got passionate about programming. I had always considered myself as a Liberal Arts person, and wanted to be either a foreign language teacher or a diplomat. It was when I moved to the U.S. that I realized that English was not my strong suit anymore. However, although I was better in STEM than humanities, I always denied that STEM was my path because I valued creativity, wanting to become a movie director - on which math and science did not seem to focus. Then I met Mrs. Shuman, who shifted my perspective on math 180 degrees.

To be honest, it wasn't love at first sight, but rather a gradual entanglement. The first impression of coding was like that of Hawaiian pizza; it started with mere curiosity. I am not a fan of pizza, but I would say Hawaiian pizza is addicting. Like pineapples in pizza, coding added the sweetness of creativity to the insipidity of logicity. I could add a spoon of humor when displaying the answer. I could add a pinch of a condition or a string to create a shortcut to my liking. Like Hawaiian pizza, there was something about coding that made me go back to it. Combining logical and creative thinking parts of coding attracted me. I found myself slowly opening up to STEM.

During my last year, there was a small movement at my high school trying to make AP Computer Science happen. I was part of the guinea pig year, where the school tried to offer the course as a club, before making it an official class. Although the result was a 2, which was unheard of in my AP career, that was a pivot point in my life that led me to this path.

As a Freshman, I got involved in a research project related to agriculture at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign last semester. I was fortunate enough to know someone that has been on the team for a year. He recommended me to the professor that was conducting the research and I am now a part of the team mainly as a front-end developer and

During the first semester at UIUC, I signed up for Freshman Honors class that was additional to the CS introductory course. It was a project-based class where we learned a little bit of everything - including Django, SQL, and Bash - and worked on a final project with a team. My team developed an application that introduces the shortest safest route from point A to B in the Urbana area leveraging Google Maps API and Urbana Crime API. I specifically led the front-end development, using Flutter to create a cross-platform mobile app for safe traveling. I would say I was mainly the designer of the application, as I designed the UI/UX and codebase structure of

the application and worked on building the main page of the app and integrating others' code to create a user-friendly interface.

I believe the ultimate goal of education is to have a positive impact on the community by utilizing the knowledge obtained. AI, I dare say, is the key to various problems in our society, including but not limited to: economic and environmental. I also believe that educational inequality results in economic inequity, which is why I argue that Artificial Intelligence could be the solution in areas that are "left behind." Once we are able to change the view on AI's teaching humans, as I would expect that people would be opposed to the idea, AI's can serve as teachers, textbooks, and resources in those areas.

In the case of sustainability, I would like to see self-recycling trash cans to be more generalized. Being from Korea, it was a cultural shock that every trash goes to one pile. In Korea, we don't even call water bottles trash, but rather plastic; because water bottles do not go into the trash can. I have read that AI trash cans do exist, but they are way too expensive as of now, that it is almost impossible to be seen in public. One idea I have is to utilize recyclable materials to make the trash can itself, using the 3D printing technology.

The more I learn about coding, the more I realize how computer science exists everywhere; no matter how diverse my interests are, I could find a way to incorporate computer science. Because there's flexibility with what I can do with my knowledge, I could work with and across different areas - whether it be the entertainment field or medical field. These two areas are specifically chosen because one is the path that I held onto until the last minute and the other is the path I would have never taken.

During my last two years of high school I was part of Mass Communications because of my passion in media and video production. I took the leadership role as the director and producer of school news and news magazines. I conducted interviews for the community, won in nationwide competitions, and trained other students as an elected member of Leadership Academy. I would say it is safe enough to say that I was quite involved in the area, until I realized that it is not necessary to graduate with a multimedia degree in college as there are a lot of people that did not major in multimedia that are successful in it. Especially since YouTube has become so popularized, it is possible for me to go back to video production whenever I want to. I also realized that there is CS in the movie field as well - even just simple Computer Generated Image involves programming - so the option of getting involved in the entertainment industry is still open for me to consider.

As a first child in Asian family, I too of course considered being a doctor. However, it is just not my strength to confront those who are not well, which is why I respect doctors the most. I would love to, but I just cannot; so, assisting the doctors using my knowledge has become my wish. Surgical robots are not just science fiction anymore, and there are better tasks the doctors can be doing - such as saving lives through research - if Artificial Intelligence can do the busy work for them.