

## 2014-2015 UW CSE, Donor Luncheon Speech (Graduate)

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### **Why did you choose to pursue a degree in Computer Science & Engineering?**

*Computer Science is Not Just Writing Code.* I was fortunate to work with a leading technology company during an internship. The company flew me to a naval base in New Jersey to deploy our team's product to help train U.S. Navy recruits on a virtual platform. It was spectacular. Imagine an immersive visual simulation of an ocean complete with submarines, boats, and tugs projected onto a golf ball-shaped room with a full 360-degree view. It modeled reality so well that I could not distinguish between the authentic and the artificial. Those beautifully rendered images was a product of the company's expertise in software engineering. There, I realized the importance and the enabling factor of Computer Science. It had tangible impact far beyond than just writing code.

### **Where did you grow up and get your undergrad degree? Were you always interested in math and science?**

I was born and grew up in the Philippines, and my family moved to Virginia in the early 2000s. At a young age, my brothers and I were groomed to be computational thinkers. My father trained us to play the game of Chess as early as four years old. Although we worked hard and practiced long hours, we got to travel across the World to play Chess. From the castles of Budapest to the quarters of Barcelona, it was an exciting and memorable time in my childhood.

*Computational Thinking.* Chess is about computational thinking. We plan our moves in advance, calculate tactics, exploit weaknesses, and when opportunity presents itself, you pounce and execute your plan ultimately leading to victory. Your thinking is stretched ... exercised as if the individual neurons in your brain are rearranging and priming themselves to accommodate this type of thinking.

Chess had given me so much insight on the thinking process that I could readily lift and apply these techniques to different domains. When I first stepped onto my alma mater, Virginia Tech, Computer Science and Engineering was the natural choice of major.

### **How has fellowship funding made a difference for you? Did it make a difference in your choice of grad schools?**

When I was an undergraduate researcher at Virginia Tech, I was fortunate to work with extraordinary graduate students and faculty. But there was a recurring problem in the periphery: funding. One graduate student, shared with me, the realization that if he wasn't funded next quarter, he wouldn't be able to make ends meet. He wouldn't be able to pay his rent, nor feed his wife and son, and he would be forced to immigrate back to his home country. Funding is a keystone concern and without guarantees, you could be asked to leave at a moment's notice.

*Thanks.* You can imagine, for an undergraduate interested in pursuing graduate school, that this was a scary fact. I didn't want to have to worry about money. And that's where I want to thank the donors here today, for alleviating this burden, not just for me, but for the countless students who have come before me, and I suppose, the the incoming students who will come after me. Being offered a fellowship made the difference for me, and I thank you for making my decision much easier. When I first visited the department, I could tell that I would thrive in this tight-knit community. The fellowship was the icing on the cake reinforcing my decision to be a graduate student here.

### **What do you hope to do with your CSE degree?**

While I'm only at the end of my first year and graduation is far far away, I hope to use my degree to generate research-driven projects addressing current issues in the performance, efficiency, and reliability of future computing systems. My yardstick for success will be determined by the number of users who find value in my line of research, the number of new applications enabled, and most importantly, the number of students, faculty, staff, and scientists whom I engage in developing these technologies. What better way to achieve these goals than to become a professor.

I am extremely grateful for the enthusiasm, mentorship, and support provided by my advisors, the Department, and the University as a whole. I can earnestly say, for certain, that the University of Washington will hold a special significance to me. What a terrific first year it has been so far! On behalf of the graduate student body, thank you all for your generous support!