

Student Spotlight: Anusha Nagella and Women in Computer Science Club

By Noor Majid, CSE Student Writer

Senior Anusha Nagella, Computer Science & Engineering major with a concentration in Computational Data Analytics, is the founder of the Women in Computer Science Chapter at UConn.

Women in Computer Science, also known as WiCS, is an organization focusing on supporting women in their academic, professional and personal pursuits. In particular, WiCS provides outreach to companies to aid in career development, supports job and internship applications, and connects students to research opportunities at UConn. WiCS also helps foster an empowered environment for women in what has traditionally been a male-dominated field.

Anusha was always interested in engineering and math, but discovered her love for coding after taking an AP Computer Science course in high school. At UConn, Anusha found the male-dominated classes disheartening for herself and her female classmates. "There's a community of girls in computer science that just hadn't been connected," says Anusha. "We saw each other in our classes and we had that unspoken bond, but there was nothing that really connected us. I wanted to be able to make something where we could see each other and know there's [more of us] in CSE."

Establishing a WiCS chapter at UConn began during the summer of 2020, when Anusha attended a diversity and inclusion roundtable led by Dr. Sanguthevar Rajasekaran, head of the CSE Department. The discussion

mentioned the need for a greater presence of diversity-centered organizations. Anusha jumped at the opportunity to form a new way to connect with her female peers.

UConn's chapter of WiCS was officially established at UConn in Fall 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. "The goal was to bring people together," says Anusha.

For students in CSE—many of whom weren't able to be on campus or experience in-person classes for the 2020-21 school year—WiCS was

a way to bridge that gap caused by remote learning. Now, WiCS has grown to over 90 members, with approximately 30 regularly attending the group's biweekly meetings.

Anusha plans to work as a software engineer after graduation in Spring 2022. But until then, she continues to share her advice to her freshman counterparts. "Don't get discouraged by the difficulty and always hold onto the times you're succeeding," she says. "Freshman year has assignments that



Anusha (first row, second from right) and the WiCS chapter at UConn

can be really frustrating—where they take hours and hours to complete and an answer just doesn't work, but once it works the feeling of satisfaction is so good. Always hold onto that feeling!"

The Class of 2025 is UConn Engineering's *largest* female freshman class in history [at only 31%](#). That's why it's so important to have initiatives such as WiCS that support an inclusive environment for women in engineering. To learn more about WiCS or to get involved, contact anusha.nagella@uconn.edu