Regional Women in Computing Conference a Huge Success

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On Friday, October 14, 2011, seven Virginia Tech student members of the Association for Women in Computing (AWC) drove to the Tennessee Celebration of Women in Computing, a regional conference located in Pikeville, Tennessee. The first annual conference was held at Tennessee Tech University. Throughout the two days of the conference, our undergraduate and graduate students attended panels, birds of a feather sessions, technical talks, and listen to invited and distinguished speakers. Topics covered ranged from entrepreneurship and robotics to internships and obstacles facing women in computing-related careers.

The invited speaker sessions were a particularly inspiring portion of the conference. Pooja Sankar, who founded Piazza and spoke during the CS Graduate Seminar earlier this semester, gave a talk on entrepreneurship. Erin “Ed” Donahue from Microsoft gave a speech that inspired our students so much that they invited her to give a talk at Virginia Tech on mobile phone apps, which she presented on October 28, 2011.

Our attendants felt that this shorter conference provided a fantastic opportunity to network and reap the benefits of sessions tailored to women in computing without the need to miss a week of classes. Additionally, the smaller size of the conference allowed our students to forge bonds with other attendants by seeing them at multiple events. The bonfire in between days one and two offered a way to get to know experienced researchers or industry workers in an informal setting.

Overall, the Tennessee Celebration of Women in Computing was a success, and the members of AWC look forward to attending this regional conference for years to come.
Left to right: Lena Nadolinski, Ariel Cohen (AWC President), Monkia Akbar (Grace Hopper Co-Chair) exploring scenic Falls Creek Falls near the conference site.

All attendees of the Tennessee Celebration of Women in Computing