

Departmental BPC Plan
Stony Brook University – SUNY, Department of Computer Science



Effective dates of plan: 10/18/2024 - 10/18/2026

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Context

Stony Brook University (SBU) is a public research university and is a member of AAU. The Department of Computer Science is part of the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences and offers BS, MS, and PhD degree programs in Computer Science (CS) and a BS program in Information Systems (IS). The CS program is the 4th most popular undergraduate major on campus in terms of total enrollment – ~1300 in 2024 (~1100 in-majors and ~200 pre-majors). Pre-majors are freshmen and sophomores who must achieve a certain GPA in a specific set of CS classes to advance to the major. CS also has an honors program. Demographic data specific to the undergraduate programs are as follows when contrasted with the same data in the college and the university: *White* - Univ: 24.8%, College: 16.8%, Dept: 11.7%; *Asian* - Univ: 35.5%, College: 47.2%, Dept: 53.7%; *Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or Multiracial* - Univ: 24.9%, College: 12.8%, Dept: 7.3%; *Non-resident Alien* - Univ: 10.2%, College: 17.0%, Dept: 21.1%. In terms of Gender as indicated on student records, which includes options ‘female’ and ‘male,’ the data show *Female* - Univ: 51.3%, College: 28.0%, Dept: 24.5%; *Male* - Univ: 48.7%, College: 72%, Dept: 75.5%.

The department recently completed a two-year program with NCWIT’s Extension Services and developed a preliminary understanding of the local challenges in the recruitment and retention of women in undergraduate programs. Currently, the department is working on improving the retention of women in the CS undergrad program, funded by the Center for Inclusive Computing (CIC) of Northeastern University. The department actively partners with the WISE (Women in Science and Engineering) Honors Program on campus. The WISE program offers courses, mentoring, and tutoring to female undergraduate students pursuing degrees in STEM and a set of STEM experiences for female middle and high school students. In terms of trends, the percentage of female undergrads in the department has increased slowly but steadily (13.9% in 2014 to 24.5% in 2024) in the past decade. The fraction of new women students enrolling in the CS undergraduate programs was 17.1% five years ago, but has increased to 26.9% due to our efforts. However, the representation of Black, Indigenous, and/or Latinx students remains low. We refer to students who identify as female, Black, Indigenous, and/or Latinx as students from underrepresented groups in computing.

Goals, Activities, and Evaluation

The department continues to build a nurturing environment to enable students to succeed regardless of their gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. Specific goals include the following:

G1 Recruitment. Increase the fraction of undergrad majors from underrepresented groups in CS and IS by 4 percentage points by 2027.

A11 Explore pathways for entry to the major using the CS0 courses. A major impediment to increasing the participation of underrepresented groups in the department is capping CS1 classes needed for entry to the major. For example, a large fraction (about 44%) of women – many from other majors or with undeclared majors – take the CS0 courses (CSE101 and IAE101) but the fraction reduces drastically for CS1. This effort will include improving summer offerings for CS1 classes needed for the major, offering additional sections during fall/spring and reconsidering policies for entry to the major. (Lead: Das, McDonnell)

A12 Organize additional visit days and outreach specifically for admitted students from underrepresented groups in collaboration with specific campus groups, such as WiCS, ColorStack and WISE. (Lead: A Balasubramanian, Jain)

A13 Expand outreach to local schools with high percentages of students from groups underrepresented in computing by organizing faculty or alumni visits and open houses. Encourage faculty to participate in summer visits of high school students from these schools in their labs. (Lead: Sekar, Balasubramanian)

Evaluation. Year-to-year demographic data for various cohorts – applicant pool, visit days participation, CS0 and CS1 classes, overall in-majors and pre-majors; tracking data related to the success of specific outreach efforts.

G2 Inclusive Teaching. Continue the current TA training efforts and have a minimum of 80% of faculty adopt inclusive practices in their teaching methods by 2027.

A21 Continue training TAs on the topic of diversity, equity inclusion, and pedagogy. Hold regular TA training workshops. Expand the current effort to include undergrad TAs. (Lead: A Balasubramanian)

A22 Review and expand TA recruitment methods to increase the number of TAs from groups underrepresented in computing. (Lead: C Ramakrishnan, McDonnell)

A23 Improve faculty exposure to inclusive teaching practices via panels and workshops provided by SBU's CELT (Center of Excellence in Learning and Teaching), or other sources. (Lead: Fodor, Tripathi)

A24 Contribute to evaluation of this goal, for example by introducing class climate-related questions in course evaluations. (Lead: Das)

Evaluation. Tracking data related to the number of TAs trained, TA demographics, TA participation in workshops, faculty input on their involvement in annual reports, class climate and inclusivity-related questions in the course evaluations.

G3 Improving Pedagogy in Intro CS Sequence. Revamp of CS 1 and CS 2 courses, similar to our effort to make the CS0 course more inclusive, by 2027.

A31 Develop a relatable and engaging set of programming exercises, showcase broad applications and impact of computing. (Lead: Fodor, McDonnell, Tripathi)

Evaluation. Identification, development and adoption of learning materials, end-of-term course evaluations and student surveys. Analysis of performance in CSE101 and CSE114 by demographic groups.

G4 Student Experience and Retention. Improve students' experience and build their confidence aiming for improved retention of students from underrepresented groups. Women drop out of CS at a higher rate than men in the department. By 2027, reduce attrition of underrepresented groups to be on par with the general student population in CS.

A41 Increase faculty involvement in undergraduate research through WISE honors (Women in Science and Engineering) research rotations. (Lead: Sekar, Jain)

A42 Increase faculty participation in WiCS and ColorStack events. (Lead: Balasubramanian)

A43 Establish a peer mentoring program for students from groups underrepresented in computing. Create graduate fellowships to encourage the participation of grad students in peer mentoring. (Lead: McDonnell)

A44 Create focus groups to understand issues specific to commuter students and find ways to better support them. Over 40% of the undergrads in the department are commuters and initial data show that the dropout rate of women commuters relative to non-commuters is statistically significant. (Lead: A Balasubramanian, Zadok)

A45 Develop multidimensional data analysis to understand why and where women drop out more frequently in the mandatory CS sequence. (Lead: Zadok, Mueller)

Evaluation. CRA's annual Data Buddies survey, department-level survey/data collection, student participation in peer mentoring, and data related to faculty participation via annual reports.