Tulane women in tech

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Anastasia Kurdia, a professor of practice in the Tulane Department of Computer Science and coordinator of the undergraduate coordinate major, traces part of tech's gender gap problem to education. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

It's an industrywide problem: Fewer women than men practice computer science.

Fast Company reported in March 2016 on a new study by the financial software and data firm Smart Asset that U.S. women make up only 26.5 percent of the tech workforce. And women earn, on average, just 85 percent of what male workers do in similar positions.

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> *Anastasia Kurdia*

There is, however, good news for gender diversity in New Orleans, where women hold 38.1 percent of the tech jobs. Analysts found that "organizations such as New Orleans Women in Tech encourage a more inclusive culture for women."

[Anastasia Kurdia](), a professor of practice in the [Tulane Department of Computer Science]() and coordinator of the undergraduate coordinate major, acknowledges the seriousness of the gender gap in computer science and software engineering jobs—and she traces part of the problem to education.

"In the past, computers and video games were marketed as toys for boys. Schools and after-school programs didn't offer programming classes. As a result, many persons arrive to college without prior experience with computer science, and hence, without confidence that they have what it takes to succeed in this field.

"They are often afraid to try computing, or if they do, they quit too early to see their great progress. The media image of a stereotypical nerdy programmer who dreams in code wasn't helpful either for making most people believe that they could belong to the computing field," says Kurdia.

At Tulane, though, there is a friendly learning environment for computer science, says Kurdia. Computer science is offered as an interdisciplinary program, with students pursuing another major, such as mathematics, neuroscience, biology, chemical or biomedical engineering, music, linguistics, business and accounting.

Today, computer science drives innovation and progress in every field. And the mission of the Tulane computer science department is to educate students to be efficient problem-solvers.

"Almost everything we do in the classroom has direct applications to several areas of real life," says Kurdia.

Read more about tech at Tulane in "Digital Revolution."

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